

P R A C T I C A L
DISCOURSES

U P O N

Several Subjects.

V O L. I.

By JOHN SCOTT, D. D. *late*
Rector of St. Giles in the Fields.

The F O U R T H E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N :

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To the Honourable

WILLIAM MOUNTAGUE, Esq;

THE following Discourses do breath the Spirit of the Author, (who being dead yet speaketh) for they carry in them a very sensible Concern for the Honour of God, and for that (in which that Honour has chiefly displayed itself to us) the Good of Mankind. For it will be no hard Matter for a considering Reader to be convinced that Misery (whether here, or hereafter) is the fatal Consequence of Wickedness ; and that to make
ourselves

The Epistle Dedicatory.

ourselves happy we must make ourselves Good. And therefore it is hoped, that the seasonable Publication of them may by God's Blessing, and by the sweet and forcible Insinuations of that Candor, Zeal, and Reason, with which they are inculcated, at least assist a vicious Age to recollect itself; and may so far do so, as to be a means to reclaim some of those who have blotted it with that Character. And this Hope is so much the greater, because, as we may rationally expect God's Blessing upon our good Endeavours; so we may the more firmly do so, when such our Endeavours are
warm

The Epistle Dedicatory.

warm and hearty. The Good and Merciful God accompany the Design of the Author with his Grace; and extend that Grace to the utmost extent of the Publication; and by making both effectual, turn our Hopes into Prophecy.

Sir, The Relations of the deceased Author having observed your great Respect and Kindness to him, and your diligent Attendance upon his Ministry, hope the Dedication of these excellent Relicks of his will be acceptable to you, as they are like to be of singular Use, Profit, and Advantage to all pious and good Christians.

T H E

T H E

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B O O K S

*Wrote by the Reverend and Learned
JOHN SCOTT, D. D. some time Rector
of St. Giles in the Fields.*

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I TIMOTHY IV. 6.

Bodily exercise profiteth little ; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THE great Design of *Christianity* being to promote our *future Happiness*, and qualify us for it ; Things are more or less valuable in its esteem, as they more or less conduce to this *great and excellent End*. And hence the Apostle tells us, that of all the Virtues *Christianity* obliges us to, *Charity is the greatest*, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. that is, a sincere Love of God, and an universal good Will to Men ; and the greatest it is upon this account, because of all Virtues it is most *congenial* to the *Heavenly State*, that being a State of *endless Love*, and *pure Friendship* ; and all other Virtues are valued more or less proportionably, as they partake of this Virtue of *Charity*. To give *Worth* to our *Faith*, it is necessary it should *work by Love*, Galat. v. 6. To make our *Knowledge* acceptable, it is necessary it should run into *Love*, 1 Cor. viii. 2, 3. yea without *Charity* the Gift of *Miracles*, *Almsgiving*

giving, and *Martyrdom* it self are Things of *no value* in the accounts of *Christianity*, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3. Nay so much is this great *Virtue* designed by the *Christian Religion*, that the *Apostle* tells us that the *end of the Commandment is Charity*, 1 Tim. i. 5. that is, all the *Duties* which the *Commandment* enjoyns are designed only as *Means* to advance and perfect our *Love to God and Men*: And all *Means*, you know, are more or less excellent proportionably, as they conduce to the *Ends* they are designed for. Wherefore since our *future Happiness* is the ultimate *End* of *Christianity*, and universal *Love* our most necessary *Qualifications* for it, it necessarily follows that the *Goodness* of all *Religious Means* consists in their *Aptitude* to *abstract* and *purify* our *Affections*; to *exalt* and *sublimate* our *Love*, and to *propagate* in us that godlike and heavenly *Temper*, which is so necessary to *qualify* us for the *Enjoyment* of *God and Heaven*. But alas! how ordinary is it for *Men* to mistake their *Means* for their *Ends*, and to value themselves upon doing those Things, which if they be not directed to a farther *End*, are altogether insignificant; accounting those Things to be *absolutely* good, which are but *relatively* so, and which, unless they conduce to that which is good, are perfectly *indifferent*.

ferent. Of which we have too many sad Instances among our selves; for how many are there, who though they have *nothing* else to prize themselves for, but only of their keeping of *Fasts* and looking *sourly* on a Sunday, their hearing so many *Sermons*, and numbering so many *Prayers*; are yet bloated with as *high Conceits* of their own Sanctity and Godliness, as if they had commenced *Saints*, and were arrived to the hingest degrees of *Perfection*: And tho' *Pride* and *Malice*, *Covetousness* and *Ambition*, are the only *Graces* they are eminent in, yet shall you see these empty wretched Things peached upon the Pinnacle of *Self-Conceit*, and from thence looking down upon poor *moral* Mortals as if they were Things of an *inferiour Species*, not worthy to be reckoned in the same *Class* of Beings with themselves. Such flaunting Hypocrites, it seems, there have always been, and in these later Times it is foretold they should abound; for so the Apostle tells us 1 Tim. iv. 1. that *the Spirit speaketh expressly*, that in the later Ages there should arise a sort of People who *departing from the Faith*, should give heed to *seducing spirits and doctrines of devils*; who should *forbid Marriage*, and *command Abstinence from Meats*, vers. 3. that is, as I suppose, should place all their Religion in *outward* and *bodily Severities*,

which at best are only *Means* and *Instruments* of Religion; and that in these they should pride themselves, as if they were the only *Saints* of the Age: whereas, in truth, they would prove the rankest *Hypocrites* that ever appeared in a religious *Vizard*. And of these he exhorts *Timothy* carefully to *forewarn* his Flock, and for his own part to *reject* their profane and ridiculous Fables; and rather to exercise himself in true *substantial* Godliness, than in such *outward bodily* Rigors and Severities; for which he subjoyns this general Reason, *for bodily exercise profiteth little*, that is, *mere outward bodily Exercise* in Religion abstracted from *inward Piety* and Godliness, is of very little avail in a Religious Account: For the bodily Exercise here spoken of, it seems, was such as had some *little Profit* attending it, and consequently was such as had some *general Tendency* to Good, and was improvable to *some* advantage, had it been *wisely* managed and directed. For *πρὸς ὀλίγον*, here translated *little*, is not so to be understood, as if it signified *nothing*; because it is here opposed to something that is greater, *viz.* to *πρὸς πάντα*: *Bodily Exercise profiteth little, but Godliness is profitable for all things*; and therefore this bodily Exercise must profit *something*, though less than Godliness, which is profitable for *all* things:

things: As when *Plato* says *Σωκράτης ἐστὶ ὀλίγον φροντισὶν, ἀληθείας δὲ πολλὴ*, *Socrates* must be a little attended, but *Truth* a great deal more. And if it be such an Exercise as doth profit a *little*, then it must be such as is *Religious*, and is of some *small* account in Religion. In the Prosecution of this Subject therefore I shall do these two things:

I. Shew you what this *outward* or *bodily* Exercise in Religion is.

II. In what Cases it is that it profits little.

I. Wherein doth this *bodily* Exercise consist? I answer, it consists in these six things:

1. In an outward visible *Profession* of Religion.

2. In *bodily Severities* upon Religious Accounts.

3. In *bodily Passions* in Religion.

4. In *bodily Worship*.

5. In *bodily Fluency* and *Volubility* in Religious Exercises.

6 In a mere outward *Form* or *Round* of Religious Duties.

1. It consists in an outward visible *Profession* of Religion. That we should make a visible *Profession* of the true Religion, when it is sufficiently proposed to us, is an unquestionable *Duty*, and that for this

Reason; because not to *profess visibly* what we believe to be the true Religion, is an open *disowning* of God, who is the immediate Object of all true Religion. For he that *believes* that this is the Will of God, and yet is either *ashamed* or *afraid* openly to *avow* and *acknowledge* it, declares that he is either ashamed of God, or that he fears *Man* more than *God*; both which are highly impious. Besides, by our *visible* owning of Religion, we propose it to *others*, who by our Example may be perswaded to embrace it as well as we; and it is our Duty not only to *entertain* the true Religion our *selves*, but so far as in us lies, to *propagate* it to *others*; that so diffusing our *Light* round about us, others may be *directed* to Heaven by it as well as our selves. This therefore is of *some* Account with God, that we *visibly* profess the true Religion; but if this be *all* we do, it will profit us but very little. For if we do not own Religion in our *Actions*, while we profess it in our *Words*, we contradict our selves; our *Practice* gives the Lye to our *Creed*, and our wicked *Lives* baffle our holy *Profession*: for while a Man acts *contrary* to the Rules of his Religion, he doth as effectually *disown* it, as if he should openly *renounce* his Baptism, and make a publick *Recantation* of Christianity. For as our *Profession* of Religion

gion is performed by a *visible* signification of our Belief of it, and as this may be signified by our *Actions* as well as our *Words*; so in effect we do *renounce* Religion when we give any *visible* signification that we do *not* believe it; and this we do as well when we *act* like Infidels, as when by *Words* we declare our Infidelity. For by our *Deeds* we may signify our Minds as well as by our *Words*, and he that *acts* as if he did not believe, doth give a more *convincing* Argument of his Infidelity, than all his *Words* or *Professions* can be of the contrary; because it is rationally supposable that a Man will rather *pretend* to believe what he doth not, than that he will *act* contrary to his own Belief and Judgment; it being a greater degree of *Violence* to our selves to *act* contrary to what we do believe, than to *pretend* to believe what we do not. So that it is not all our *Talk* and *verbal* owning of Religion that will serve the end of a *visible* Profession, which is, so to own God as to induce *others* to own him as well as our *selves*; because he that denies God in his *Actions* will never be able to induce others to believe that he doth *sincerely* own him in his *Words* and *Professions*. Wherefore unless we will *live up* to the Rules of our Religion, we were as good not to make any *visible* Profession of it; for our *Profession* will serve

no good Ends of Religion; it may indeed *disgrace* it in the Opinion of those who measure its Goodness by the *Lives* of its Votaries; for either they will think that our Religion *teaches* us to live as we do, and that will make them *abhor* it; or else they will imagine that notwithstanding our Profession we do *not believe* it, and that will make them *suspect* it to be a Cheat and Imposture. So that for any Good Christianity is like to reap from *wicked Christians* professing it, it were highly desirable that they would *renounce* their Baptism, and openly *declare* themselves Atheists or Infidels; because by their *Actions* they blaspheme the Religion they profess, and by *assuming* to themselves the holy Name of Christians they do but more openly *profane* it.

2. Another sort of *bodily* Exercise that is of *some*, though but *little* Account in Religion; is our voluntary undergoing of bodily *Rigours* or *Severities* upon the score of Religion. There is doubtless a very *wise* use to be made of *bodily* Severities in Religion, provided they be but used with that *Prudence* and *Caution* as they ought to be; for they are excellent Remedies against many of our inordinate *fleshy Inclinations*, to tame our extravagant *Appetites*, and to render them more tractable to the **Commands** of *Reason* and *Religion*: besides, that in the
general

general they are of singular Use to wean our Souls from the Pleasures of the *Body*, which do often *corrupt* the palate of the *Mind*, and render it *incapable* of relishing *divine* Enjoyments. For if we *indulge* to our Appetities all those *lawful* Pleasures which they crave, our Souls will be apt to contract *too great* a Familiarity with the *Flesh*, and to be so taken up with the Delights and Satisfactions of it, as to neglect those *diviner* Pleasures for which they were created, and which are more *natural* and *congenial* to them; and considering that in our *future* State we must live without these *Bodies*, and take leave of all the Pleasures of them, it is very requisite that we should now before-hand *wean* and *abstract* our selves from the Enjoyments of *corporeal* Sense, that so when we come to *part* with them we may know how to be *happy* without them, and be fit to live the Lives of *naked* Spirits. And therefore we find that there has scarce been *any* Religion whatsoever pretending to qualify Men for *another* Life, but hath imposed *Fasting* and *Abstinence*, and other bodily *Severities*, as proper Means to *lustrate* and *purify* the Mind, and to *prepare* it for immediate Converses with God and separated Spirits; but then the Consequence was, that the over-strict *Imposition* of these *Instrumentals* of Religion occasioned a world
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of *Superstition* ; for being so strictly imposed, they obtained so far in the Opinion of the World, as to be reckoned among the *Essentials* of Religion, and counted absolutely good, and in their own *Nature* pleasing and grateful unto God ; which possibly by degrees introduced those *phanta musia*, horrid and bloody Mysteries into the *Heathen Religion*. For Mankind being once possessed with such an Opinion of God, as to think he was pleased and delighted to see his poor Creatures *afflict* and punish themselves ; it was easie from thence to infer that he would be much more pleased to see them *butcher* themselves, and sprinkle his Altars with their own *Blood*. And as this *over-weening* Opinion did probably introduce *human Sacrifices* into the *Heathen Religion* ; so it is certain that it hath introduced sundry false Doctrines into the *Romish* ; as particularly, that *Fasting*, and *Whipping* our selves, and going on *Pilgrimages*, are *meritorius* Things ; that by them we *expiate* our Sins, and make *Satisfaction* to the Justice of God ; as if the Guilt that binds us over to *eternal* Perdition were to be expiated by a sound *Whipping*, or a *short Pilgrimage* were a proportionable Commutation for the *eternal Penance* of Hell Fire. But these are the vain Imaginations of *Men*, who would faign impose Laws upon *God*,
and

and prescribe to him the *Measures* of Punishment; who would *do* as wickedly as they please, and *suffer* what they please for so doing. But let us not deceive our selves, if *we* will choose to *sin*, it is reasonable that that *God* whom we offend by our Sin should choose and appoint our *Punishment*. It is by no means fit that *Criminals* should be their own *Judges*; for if they were, they would have very little Reason to be afraid of sinning; because they would be obliged to *suffer* no more for it than what they *pleased* themselves: but the Right of *punishing* is in the *offended* Party; and therefore if we will offend God by violating his Laws, we have no right to *choose* our own *Penance*, but must, whether we will or no, submit to what *He* thinks fit to inflict upon us; and what that is he hath told us before-hand, even *everlasting* Expulsion from his Presence into the Society and Portion of Devils, and damned Spirits. So that for us to expect to atone and satisfy God by little *voluntary* Penances of our own, is just as unreasonable as if a Murderer should cut off his little Finger, and thereupon expect to be excused from the Penalty of the Law.

And as these *bodily* Severities are no *Expiations* of our Sins, so neither are they in their own Nature *pleasing* and *grateful* unto God: for he is a *good* God, and an univer-
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sal *Lover* of all his Creation ; and consequently can be no farther *pleased* with the Sufferings and Afflictions of any of his Creatures, than as they are *necessary* either to do *them* good, or to make them exemplary to *others*, or to vindicate the *Honour* of his own violated Laws ; neither of which Ends are served by *voluntary* Penances and Severities as such, if they be not subordinated to the Ends of *Virtue* and *Religion*. For what can *Fasting* signify, if it be not designed to famish our *Lusts* ? Can our hungry Bowels be a *delightful* Spectacle to that God who feeds the young Ravens, and takes so much care to provide for all his Creation ? What *Virtue* is there in the Chastning of our *Bodies*, if it be not intended to humble and mortify our *Souls* ? Do we think that that God, who is so zealous of our *Welfare*, can be recreated with our *Miseries*, or take pleasure in our *tragical* Looks, and *bloody* Shoulders ? 'Tis true, so far as these things are *Instruments* of Good to us, they are pleasing unto God, even as all other *Instruments* of Religion ; but it is not the suffering of our *Bodies* he is pleased with, but the good which it doth our *Souls* : but if they do our *Souls* no good, if they do not purify our *Affections*, and wean us from fleshly *Desires*, and make us more fit for the heavenly State, they are as insignificant

significant in the Account of God, as the paring of our Nails, or the clipping of our Hair.

3. Another sort of these *bodily* Exercises that are of *some*, though but *little* account in Religion, is *bodily Passions* in Religion. There is, I confess, an excellent Use to be made of our *bodily Passions* in the Exercise of our Religion, provided we do not place our Religion in them; for if we do, they will betray us into the grossest *Cheats* and *Impostures*. For in the general we find, that our *Passions* do wing our *intellectual* Faculties, and render them more *intense* and *expedite* in their Operations. For whilst the *Soul* and *Body* are united to one another, there is a *mutual* Reflowing and Communication of *Passions* between them, insomuch that whensoever the *Soul* is any ways affected with any Object, there immediately follows a suitable Perturbation or Passion in the *Body*; and then this Passion of the *Body*, as it is grateful or ingrateful to it, doth more vigorously affect the *Soul* with Love or Averfation; and then the *Soul* being thus reaffected and incited by the *bodily Passion*, will more vehemently *pursue* or *shun* the Object which caused its *first Motion* or *Affection*. When therefore our Souls and Bodies do thus *sympathize* with each other in the Exercises of Religion, we must necessarily

cessarily perform them with *greater Vigour* and *Intention*.

But to make this more plain to you, I will briefly instance in those four great Passions of Religion, viz. *Love*, and *Hatred*, and *Sorrow*, and *Joy*. As for that of *Love*; when the Soul is affected with God, or *Virtue*, or any other *amiable* Objects of Religion; immediately there follows a *sweet* and *grateful* Passion in the Body. For the *Heart* being dilated towards the beloved Object, puts the *Blood* and *Spirits* into a free and placid Motion, which diffuses a certain *agreeable Heat* into the *Breast*, and invigorates the *Brain* with a flood of *active* Spirits; and then the *Soul* being sensible of this grateful Emotion in the *Body*, is thereby more vigorously *incited* to pursue those *amiable* Objects wherewith she was first affected. And so for *Hatred*; when the *Soul* is practically convinced by the Arguments of Religion of the *Odiousness* of any Evil it forbids, the *Enmity* and *Hatred* she hath towards it causes an anxious Contradiction of the *Heart*, and Compression of the *Animal Spirits*, which produces a *Chilness* in the *Breast*, a retarding of the *Blood*, and an unequal motion of the *Pulse*; and then the *Soul* sympathizing with the *Body*, cannot but be sensible of this ungrateful Passion it is put into, which must needs add to her *Hatred* of those odi-

ous Objects which were the Cause of it, and cause her more *vehemently* to shun and avoid them. So again when the *Soul* is moved to *Sorrow* and *Repentance* for any past Sins and Miscarriages, the sad Regrets she suffers within her self produce a very doleful Passion in the *Body*; such as pinches the *Heart*, congeals the *Blood*, and causes an ungrateful Languor of the *Spirits*; and then by compassionating her grieved *Consort*, she is thereby excited to a higher degree of *Displeasure* against those Sins that caused its Grief and Disturbance. Lastly, when the *Soul* is *joyed* and *delighted* with any religious Object, or Exercise; by that sweet *Complacency* she enjoys within her self, there is produced a most *pleasant* Emotion in the *Body*, the Animal Spirits flowing to the Heart in an *equal* and *placid* Stream; where being arrived through its dilated Orifices, they sooth and tickle it into a most *sensible* Pleasure; and then the *Soul* being affected with the *Body's* Pleasure, doth from thence derive an *additional* Joy, which doth more vigorously encourage her to *pursue* those Objects, and *continue* those Exercises from whence her *Original* Joy proceeded.

So that, you see, that by reason of that *perpetual* Intercourse there is between our *Souls* and our *Bodies*, there is an excellent Use even of our *sensitive* Passions in Religi-

on. And it cannot be denied but that a *gentle* Temper of *Body*, whose *passions* are soft, and easie, and ductile, and apt to be commoved with the *Soul*, may be of great *advantage* in our Religious Exercises; because whensoever it is *religiously* affected, its *Passions* will be apt to *intend* and *quicken* the *Affections* of the *Soul*, and to render them more *vigorous* and *active*; but farther than *this*, they are of no account at all in Religion. For as there are many Men who are *sincerely good*, that yet cannot raise their *sensitive* *Passions* in their *religious* Exercises; that are heartily *sorry* for their Sins, and yet cannot *weep* for them; that do entirely *love* God and *delight* in his Service, and yet cannot put their Blood and Spirits into the *enraving* Emotions of *sensitive* Love and Joy: so on the other hand, there are many gross *Hypocrites* that have not one dram of *true* Piety in them, who yet in their Religious Exercises can put themselves into wondrous *Transports* of *bodily* Passion; that can *pour* out their Confessions in Floods of *Tears*, and cause their Hearts to dilate into *Raptures* of *sensitive* Love, and their Spirits to tickle them into *Ecstasies* of Joy; which is purely to be resolved into the *different* *Temper*s of Mens Bodies, some *Temper*s being naturally so *calm* and *sedate*, as that they are scarce capable of being disturbed into a *Passion*,

sion; others again so so *soft* and *tender* and *impressible*, that the most frivolous Fancy is able to raise a Commotion in them. And hence we see that some People can *weep* most heartily at the Misfortunes of Lovers in Plays and Romances, and as much *rejoyce* at their good Successes, though they know that both are *Fictions* and mere Idea's of *Fancy*; whereas others can scarce shed a *Tear* or raise a *sensitive* Joy at the *real* Calamities or Prosperities of a *Friend*; whom yet they love a great deal more than these Men can possibly do their *feigned* and *Romantick* Heroes. And yet alas how very often do Men place the *whole* of their Religion in these *mechanical* Motions of their *Blood* and *Spirits*; that think they are exceeding *good*, if they can but chase themselves into a devout *Passion*; and that it is an infallible Sign of *Godliness* that their Blood and Spirits are easily *moved* by religious Idea's, and apt to be *elevated* or *dejected* according as sad or joyous Arguments are *pathetically* represented to their *Fancies*: and though they do not understand the *Argument*, or which is all one to them, though that which is delivered for Argument is mere *Gibberish*, and insignificant *Canting*, that hath nothing of *Argument* or *Reality* in it, only some *empty Fiction* is conveyed to their Fancies by a musical Voice in *farciful*

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Expressions ; yet because they are affected by it, and it raises a *sensible* Perturbation in their *Blood* and *Spirits*, they presently conclude it to be an *Income* of God, and an infallible Token of his *special Love* and *Favour* to them ; as if it were a Sign of *Godliness*, and a Mark of *God's Favorites* to be affected with *Nonsense*, feathered with soft and delicate Phrases, and pointed with pathetick Accents.

Thus there are some Men who believe themselves to be *converted*, meerly because they have run through all the Stages of *Passion*, in that new Road of *Artificial Conversion* which some modern Authors have found out ; for according as the *Work of Conversion* hath been described by some modern Authors, it is wholly placed in so many different Scenes of *Passion*. For first a Man must pass under the Discipline of the *Law*, and the Spirit of *Bondage* ; that is, he must be *frightned* into a Sense of his lost and undone Condition, and in this Sense he must grieve bitterly for his Sins as the *Causes* of his Ruin and Perdition ; and this is that which they call *Conviction* and *Compunction*. From hence he must proceed into the *Evangelical State*, and pass into the Spirit of *Adoption*, the Entrance of which is *Contrition* or *Humiliation* ; which consists in an *ingenious Sorrow* for Sin, proceeding from a
passionate

passionate Sense of God's Love and Goodness; and then having acted over all these mournful Passions, he embraces and lays hold upon Christ, which is the concluding Scene, and is altogether made up of Joy and Exultation, and so the Work of Conversion is finish'd. Now though I do not at all deny, but to the Conversion of an habitual Sinner it is indispensably necessary that he should be convinc'd of his Danger, and deeply affected with Sorrow and Remorse for his Folly and Wickedness; (and therefore would not be so understood, as if I intended to discountenance these holy Passions, which are such necessary Introductions to a sincere Conversion:) yet neither do I doubt, but by the help of a melancholy Fancy attended with soft and easie Passions, a Man may perform all these Parts of Conversion, and yet be never the better for it; for many times these Passions are only the necessary effects of a diseased Fancy, and are altogether as mechanical as the beating of our Pulse, or the Circulation of our Blood. And hence we see that this kind of Conversion, which wholly consists of bodily Passions, doth commonly both begin and end with some languishing Distemper of the Body, in which the Fancy is over-clouded, and the Motion of the Blood and Spirits retarded by the Prevalence of black and melancholy Humours;

which being once evacuated, the Man's Body returns again to its *former* Temper, and upon this he becomes the *same* Man again that he was before his *pretended Conversion*. And accordingly it is observed by those very Persons who place the whole Work of Conversion in these *Mechanical* Passions, that generally after the *Pangs* of Regeneration are over, their Converts grow *cold* and *careless*; and *remiss* in Religion; and so like to what they were in the State of *Nature*, that you would hardly believe they had ever been *converted*; which is a plain Evidence that this sort of *Conversion* doth not reach the *Soul*, that it doth not alter our *practical* Judgment of things, nor rationally determine our Wills to *new Choices* and *Resolutions*; and consequently that it is nothing but a mere Train of *sensitive* Passions *mechanically* excited by the *Fancy*. And hence you may observe in the Modern Stories of our *Religious Melancholians*, that they commonly pass out of one *Passion* into another without any manner of *Reasoning* and *Discourse*; now they are in the Depths of *Grief* and *Despair*, by and by upon the Pinnacle of *Joy* and *Assurance*; and yet they are the *same Men*, neither *better* nor *worse*, when they do *despair*, as when they are *assured*; and consequently have no more Reason to be *assured* now, than they had when they

they were encompassed with all the Horrors of *Desperation*. For the only Reason any Man hath to be *assured* of God's Love, is his *Likeness* and *Conformity* to Him; which is that alone that *endears* us unto God, and entitles us to the Promise of his *Favour*. And yet though these Men do not pretend to be *better*, or more *Godlike* now they are *assured*, than they were when they *despaired*; yet their Hearts are overwhelmed with Floods of *sensitive* Joy, and they are strangely comforted they know not *how* or *wherefore*: And though while they were in *Despair*, they thought of those Promises and Motives of *Comfort* that now *ravish* and *transport* them, and had every whit as much *Reason* to lay claim to them too; yet then they lay like Cakes of Ice at their Hearts without affording them the least Gleam of Warmth and Comfort; which is a plain evidence that both their *Joys* and *Sorrows* are the products of *bodily Temper*, and not of *Reason* and *Judgment*; because they pass out of one into the other without any intervening *Discourse*, and are agitated into contrary *Passions* whilst they are under the same *Rational* Motives; are dejected this moment, and comforted the next, which argues, that their *Reason* hath no hand in their *Passions*; for if it had, they could never be so contrarily affected. Nor can it be supposed,

that such *irrational* Passions are raised in them by the *Divine* Spirit; because He *ordinarily* works upon Men in an *humane* and *rational* way, beginning with their *Understandings*, and so perswading their *Wills*, and exciting their *Passions* by *rational* Motives and Arguments: Those Passions therefore that are not *so* excited can be resolved into no other Principle but that of *bodily* Temper. And accordingly you may observe, that all this Train of *Passions*, wherein too many Men do place the *whole* of their *Conversion*, are necessarily connected and chained to one another; so that if you move but the first Link, all the rest will naturally follow; which is a plain Argument that they may be excited not only in a *free* and *rational*, but also in a *necessary*, or *mechanical* way. As for instance, Suppose these Men before their *pretended Conversion* to have a good Dose of *Melancholy* in their Tempers, this will naturally dispose them to *terrible* and *mournful* Conceits; and being thus disposed, their tender *Fancies* are easily impressed with *dreadful* Images of the Wrath of God and their own undone Condition: And according as the *Temper* of their Bodies is more or less disposed to *fear*, so this frightful Passion continues *longer* or *shorter* upon 'em; if it continues *longer*, it will by the *reiterated* Impressions of those dreadful Objects

Objects that first raised it, by degrees be heightened into *Horror* and *Desperation*; and when it is so, then the Man is under *Conviction* of his undone Condition, and under the *Terrors* of the Law, and the Spirit of Bondage; which, according to the new Method, is always the *first* Step to Conversion. And when the *first* Fury of *Despair* is over, it naturally issues into a *deep Melancholy*, and there spends it self in woful Regrets, and self-condemning Reflections; and this is that which they call *Attrition*, or *Compunction*, which is the next Step to be taken in this *methodical* way of *Conversion*. And hence many People do continue many Years together in this *languishing* state, in all which time they believe themselves to be under the Lash of the Law, and the Discipline of the *Spirit of Bondage*; when, God knows, many times there is nothing in it but a mere *melancholy* Humour tinged and heightened with *dismal* Notions of Religion. But then when the Melancholy begins to *disperse*, and to make way for the Spirits to flow into the Brain in a more *brisk* and *active* Torrent, and so to *warm* and *refresh* the drooping Fancy; they will by degrees *scatter* those horrid Images and dismal Fancies of Religion that rid the Imagination, and raised those tragical Passions; and so the Man will gradually emerge out of the Spirit of *Bondage*

into a more *comfortable* and *Evangelical* Condition. For now his Fancy being something more *lightsome*, but still retaining some *Reliques* of its former *Darkness*, will be disposed for *grateful* as well as *disfmal* Phantasms, and to be impressed by *lovely* and *joyous*, as well as *terrible* and *mournful* Objects. So that if now *God* or *Christ*, or any other Object of *Religion*, be but represented to the Man in such a *Dress* of Metaphors and glistering Allusions, as is apt to affect his *carnalized* Fancy, he will presently form such *charming* Conceits and *pleasant* Imaginations of them, as will necessarily put his Blood and Spirits into a most *amorous* Emotion towards them; so that now he shall seem *inflamed* with the Love of *Christ*, and fancy him *twined* in his Arms and Embraces: whereas in *Reality* the Thing he is so infinitely fond of, is nothing but an *Idol* of his own Fancy, a mere *Baby-Christ*, drest up by his own *Imagination* in all the Charms of *sensual* Beauty, and furnished with Smiles, and Kisses, and Caresses, and all the pretty Indearments of a doating Lover. And now the Man's Fancy being thus partly hung with fine Pictures of *Christ*, those Reliques of *Melancholy* Vapours that are yet remaining in it, will very much dispose it to *sad* and *mournful* Conceits; especially when this *Idol* of *Christ*, which he so much doats upon,

on, shall be represented as *weeping* over his Sins, and *grieved* at the Unkindnesses he shews him. And now his Fancy being thus furnished with such a Mixture of *amorous* and *mournful* Imaginations, must necessarily beget in him a Mixture of *Love* and *Grief* and cause him to *mourn* for his Sins; because they make his Saviour *grieve* whom he seems to *love* so dearly: And this is *Humiliation*, which is the *third* Stage in this *imaginary* Road of Conversion. And now the Man having set up so *gay* an Image of Christ in his Fancy, and felt within himself such *sensible* Pangs of *Love* towards him, and *Grief* for the Affronts and Unkindnesses he hath offered him, his *amorous* Imagination will presently suggest to him, that doubtless so *sweet* a Saviour cannot but be conquered with all these *passionate* Indearments, and smitten with a *reciprocal* Love upon so many *feeling* Expressions of his Kindness towards him; and being possessed with this Imagination, he will presently fancy his *dear* Image of Christ into all the Postures of a transported *Lover*; smiling upon him, weeping over him, and spreading out his Arms to embrace him; upon which there will follow such a sweet Effusion of his Spirits towards his enamoured Saviour, that he will fancy himself to be leaping into his Arms, and *rolling* in his Bosom, and *resting*, and
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leaning, and *relying* upon him. And now his Fancy having carried him to his *Journey's End*, and lodged him in the Embraces of his Saviour, O the Joy and Ravishment ! he feels his Heart pant through *Excess* of Delight, and is ready to break with its own *Raptures*. And thus you see how this whole Method of *Conversion* may be easily transacted by an *active* and *melancholy* Fancy.

And as it *may* be, so I doubt not but many times it *is* ; for how many Men are there who strongly *imagine* themselves to have been *converted*, that yet are never the *better* for it, being still as averse unto God and true Goodness as ever they were before ; nay and many times are so far from being *better'd* by their Conversion, that they are a great deal the *worse* for it ; for instead of *forsaking* all Sin, which is that wherein true Conversation doth consist, they only *shift* their Vices, and many times in laying *one* Devil, they conjure up *seven* worse in the room of it. Perhaps before they fancied themselves to have been *converted*, they were *openly* lewd and profane ; they would swear and be drunk, and wallow in *Sensuality* and *Voluptuousness* ; but notwithstanding these *beastly* and *damnable* Crimes, they had some very *amiable* Qualities in them ; they were *courteous* and *affable*, and *kind* and *obliging* ; *faithful* in their Professions, and *just* and *honest*

honest in their Dealings; but now alas! by passing through these dismal Stages of *pretended* Conversion, they have contracted such a mass of *melancholy Humours* as hath quite *spoil'd* their sweet and lovely Tempers into *Pride* and *Envy* *Peevishness* and *Faction*, *Insolence* and *Censoriousness*, and all the other Ingredients of a *sullen* and *unsociable* Nature. So that though now indeed they will not be *openly* lewd and profane, as they were before, yet, which is a great deal worse, they will be *false* and *ill-natur'd*, and *gripping* and *ungovernable*; and, which is worst of all, they will be all this while under the Disguise of *Religion*, and the Patronage of a deceived *Conscience*: so that whereas their former Vices had only the Possession of their *Wills*, but not of their *Consciences*, these are seized of *both*, which renders their Condition the more dangerous. For heretofore *Virtue* and *Religion* had a strong Party *within* them, there being a Law in their *Minds* that warred against the Law in their *Members*; but now all is *subdued* to the Dominion of their Sins, and their *Wills* and *Consciences*, like *Simeon* and *Levi*, become *Brethren in Iniquity*. Whilst therefore Men place their Religion in such *artificial* Trains of *Passion*, they will be liable to all manner of *Cheats* and *Impostures*. For the Generality of Men being ignorant of the Power of *Melancholy*.

lancholy, and of the Frame and Structure of their own *Bodies* ; if their *Fancies* are but tinged with Religion, they will be apt to attribute every extraordinary Emotion they feel to the immediate Influence of the *Spirit* of God, and to account that to be *Grace* and *Inspiration* which is a mere necessary Effect of *Matter* and *Motion* ; and being once possessed with this Conceit, they lie open to all the Follies of *Enthusiasm* ; for now nothing will satisfy them but *Heats* of Fancy, and *Transports* of Passion ; and whilst they should be attending to the *sober* Dictates of *Scripture* and right *Reason*, they will be looking for *Incomes*, and *Impulses*, and *secret Manifestations* ; and consequently, will be apt to interpret every odd *Whimsy* for an inward Whisper from *Heaven*, and every brisk *Emotion* of their Spirits for an immediate Smile of *God's Countenance* ; than which, I dare boldly say, there is nothing more *mischievous* to Religion, or *contrary* to the Life and Power of it. For *Religion* is a *wise*, a *still*, and *silent* thing, that consists not in Frisks of *Fancy*, and *Whirlwinds* of *Passion* ; but in a *divine* Temper of Mind, and an universal *Resignation* of our Wills to God ; and this not only in intermittent *Fits* of Passion, but in the midst of *cool* Thoughts and *calm* Deliberations. For *true Religion* is a State of a *fixt* and *constant* Nature, that doth

doth not *come* and *go*, like the Colours of a blushing Face, but is the *natural* and *true* Complexion of the Soul. How religious soever therefore we may be in our passionate *Heats* and *Transports*, it is altogether insignificant, unless the *standing Temper* of our Minds be *good*, and our Religion be settled in our *Natures*. For though it cannot be denied but these our *bodily* Passions do profit *something*, as they are useful *Instruments* of Religion; yet I think it is very apparent from what hath been said, that he who places his Religion in them doth but *deceive* his own Soul.

4. Another sort of *bodily* Exercise that is of *some*, though but *little* Account in Religion, is *Fluency* and *Volubility* in Religious Exercises, or a Readiness of wording our Thoughts in *proper* and *affecting* Expressions; either in *Prayer* to God, or in *speaking* of God and Things divine: the proper Use of which is this, that in Prayer it is apt to *excite* and *kindle* our devout and religious Affections. For besides that *Scantiness* of Words in Prayer doth *divert* the Mind by putting it to the Trouble of inventing *new Expressions* to clothe its Thoughts and Desires, which because of its Inability to attend many things at once, must needs *interrupt* its Zeal and Intention, and so make *Breaks* and *Chasms* in its Devotions: whereas when a
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Man expresses himself *easily* and *fluently*, so that his Words keep pace with his *Desires* and *Affections*, he will be able to keep his Thoughts more *intent*, and to *fix* himself upon God with all the *united Vigour* of his Mind, which not being disturbed with the *Difficulty* of expressing its Desires, will be the more at leisure to *intend* them, that so its Devotions may flow *secundo flumine*, in a more easie and undisturbed Current : besides which, I say, we all find by Experience, that *proper* and *fluent* Expressions are in their own Nature apt to *warm* and *heighten* our Affections, which nothing hath a greater Influence in than the Charms of *pathetical Oratory*. To be able therefore to word our Prayers in *proper* and *ready* Expressions, is of considerable *Advantage* to our Devotions ; our *Words* being so apt to affect our *Minds*, and our *Passions* to keep time with the Musick of our own *Language* : and whilst we wear these *Bodies* about us, and our *Souls* are so clogged and depressed with *fleshly* Desires, we have need enough to use all Arts and Advantages of *Spiriting* and *enlivening* our Devotions. But yet I confess, of all these *bodily* Exercises, this is the *least considerable* in Religion ; because we may easily supply the Defect of *natural* Fluency by excellent *Forms* of Prayer, the Use of which is doubtless far more *expedient* than the best
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of our *Extempore* Effusions. For he that uses a *Form*, hath nothing else to do in Prayer but only to *recollect* his own Thoughts, and fix them upon God; and to keep his *Mind* affected with a *due Sense* of the Divine Majesty, and his own *Need* of and *Dependance* upon him: whereas he that prays *extempore*, besides all this, is concerned to *invent* proper and apt *Expressions*, lest he should be *impertinent* or *indecent* in his Addresses unto God; unless he expects that the *Spirit* should *immediately* dictate to him the Words of his Prayer, which is to suppose himself a Person immediately *inspired*, and his Prayer of *Divine* Revelation; and consequently, of equal Authority with the *Scriptures* themselves. But the best *Religious* Use that can be made of *Fluency* and *Volubility* of Speech, is in *speaking* to others of God and Things *Divine*; here it is useful indeed to make a Man an *Orator* for *Religion*, and to enable him to recommend it more *effectually* to others. Thus far therefore this sort of *bodily* Exercise may be *profitable*, both as it may be made *instrumental* to raise our *own* Devotions, and to propagate true Piety unto others; but beyond *this*, I know no place at all that it hath in Religion: for there is no doubt but we may be very good Men without this Gift of *Fluency*, and very bad Men with it, there being no Necessity of

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Consequence from an *honest* Heart to a *voluble* Tongue. And certainly that which proceeds from no *higher* Principle than meer *natural* Enthusiasm, and consequently may be easily attained by Persons grossly *hypocritical* and *debauched*, ought not to be looked upon as a Mark of *Godliness*. And yet alas! how many Men are there that place *all* their *Religion* in their *Tongues*, and esteem it as a certain Sign of *Grace* that they are able to pray in *fluent* Expressions, and to talk of God in *rapturous* Flights of Fancy? For they being most commonly *straitned* in their Religious Exercises, and not able to *vent* themselves with any *Freedom* or *Readiness*; when they fall into an extraordinary *Fit* of Fluency and Enlargement, of which they can give nonatural Account, they presently conclude it to be an *immediate* Gift of God's *Spirit*, and a special Token of his *peculiar* Favour to them. And accordingly, if you peruse the late Histories of the *spiritual Experiences* of our *modern* Converts, you will find that they contain little else but strange Relations of their *rapturous* Discourses, and *wondrous* Enlargements in *Prayer*; which because they have something *extraordinary* in them, are generally thought to be the immediate Effects of the *Divine* Spirit: whereas commonly they proceed meerly from the present *Temper* of the *Body*, and are as *mechanical* as
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any other Operations of *Nature*. For let a Man's Body be but put into a *fervent* Temper, his Spirits into *quick* but *manageable* Motions, this will naturally produce in him a more *fine* and *exquisite* Power of Perception, by causing the Images of Things to come *faster* into his Fancy, and to appear more *distinct* there; and then his Fancy being more *pregnant* with new Idea's and Images than it uses to be, his Expressions must necessarily be more *fluent* and *easie*. But then if when this *natural Fervour* of his Temper be intended with Vapours of *heated Melancholy*, his Fancy be but often impressed and rubbed upon with the most vehement and moving Objects of Religion, such as *God* and *Christ*, and *Heaven* and *Hell*; it must necessarily raise in him *great* and *vehement* Passions, and dictate to him *pathetick* and *rapturous* Expressions. And this hath been commonly experimented by the *Devoto's* of all Religions; for even among the devouter *Turks* and *Heathens* we may find as notorious Instances of those *Incomes* and *Enlargements*, as in any of our *modern* Histories of Christian Experiences. Thus the *Heathen* Poets, in all high Flushes of their Fancy, conceited themselves *divinely* inspired: *Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo*. And that great Orator *Aristides* positively affirms himself to be *inspired* in his Orations; be-

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cause sometimes he felt in himself an *extraordinary* Vein of *Fluency*, which was only excited by a brisker Agitation of his Spirits. Wherefore it is not at all to be wondered at if, when Men are employed in Religious Exercises, the same *natural* Enthusiasm, especially when it is exalted by *Religious* Melancholy, should so wing and inspire their Fancies. For there is no Man whatsoever, that is but *religiously* inclined, and of a *soft* and *impressive* Temper, but by *familiarizing* his Fancy to the great Objects of *Religion*, and setting them before his Mind in *distinct* and *affecting* Idea's, may easily chase himself into such a *Pathos* as to be able to talk to, or of, God and Religion, in *lofty* and *rapturous* Strains of Divine Rhetorick; nor is it any Argument of such a Man's being *inspired*, that his Discourse doth so *move* and *affect* those that hear him; because all Language that is *soft*, *fluent* and *pathetical*, is naturally apt to make deep *Impressions* on the Auditors. For even the *Grecian* Sophists, as *Plutarch* tells us, by their *singing* *Tones*, and *honeyed* *Words*, and *effeminate* Phrases and Accents, did very often *transport* their Auditors into a kind of *Bacchical* Enthusiasm: And no doubt but the Hearers of whom he speaks, who were wont to applaud their Orators at the End of their Declamations with a *θῆλος, θεοπορίτας, δαιμονίως, ἀπερίτως*, divinely,

divinely, heavenly, preciously, unimitably spoken, found themselves as much *moved*, as many a Man doth at a Sermon; who yet thinks it is not the *Art* of the Preacher, but the *Spirit* of God speaking *in* and *by* him that warms and excites them. Wherefore as we would not deceive and undo our own *Souls*, let us have a great care that we do not place our Religion in any such *Enthusiastick* Fervors of *Spirit*, and Overflowings of *Fancy*; for though this may be a *helpful* Instrument to us in our Religious Exercises, yet it is not by this that we are to estimate the *Goodness* of them, but by those Laws and Circumstances which do *moralize* humane Actions, and render them *reasonable*, and *holy*, and *good*. For 'tis not in loud *Noises* or melting *Expressions* that the *divine* Spirit is discovered, but in a *divine* Nature and *God-like* Disposition; and the Effects of true Religion are not to be look'd for in *Words* and *Talk*, but in *Life* and *Action*; and therefore St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, some of whom, it seems, had too great an Opinion of his Way of Religious *Rhetorication*, that he would come among them and know, *not the speech of them that were puffed up, but the power; for the Kingdom of God, saith he, consisteth not in word, but in power, 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20.*

Fifthly, Another sort of *bedily* Exercise that is of *some*, thought but *little*, Account in Religion, is *outward* and *bodily* Worship. There is no doubt but we ought, when we are worshipping God, to signify the *profound* sense that we have of his Majesty and Greatness by *outward* Adorations and an *humble* and *lowly* Demeanour. For though we may signify to God the *Honour* and *Worship* that we owe him by the *internal* Acts of our *Mind*, by our *Love*, and *Fear*, and *Hope*, and *Admiration*, because he sees our *Hearts* and discerns the most *secret* Motions of our *Souls*; yet since to him we owe the Members of our *Bodies*, as well as the Faculties of our *Minds*, it is very reasonable that we should worship him with both, that both our *Bodies* and *Minds* should offer the Tribute of Homage which they owe to the *Fountain* of their Beings; that so having *each* of them a share in the Bounties of God, they may be *Co-partners* too in the Returns of *Gratitude* to him. And though the *internal* Acts of our *Minds* do sufficiently signify unto God our *Esteem* and *Veneration* of Him, yet it is highly reasonable, especially in our *publick* Addresses to him, that we should signify it to *Men* also, that *they* may be excited by our *Example* to glorify God, and to acknowledge and adore the infinite Perfections of his Nature: and we have no other way

way to signify to *Men* our Veneration of God, but only by *corporeal* Actions, that is, by such *Actions* or *Gestures* of the Body as either by *Nature* or by *Custom* are significant of our *inward* Esteem and Adoration of him. And this, without doubt, is a Part of *Natural Religion*; forasmuch as there never was any People of *any Religion* whatsoever, but what have always expressed their Veneration of the *Divinities* whom they owned, by such *external* Reverences as were customary amongst them. And accordingly we are enjoined in Scripture to offer up unto God the Homage of our *Bodies* as well as of our Souls; *to worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker*, Psal. xcv. 6. and *to glorifie him with our Souls and Bodies, which are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. And when the Devil solicited our Saviour with the Promise of all the Kingdoms of the World to bow down and worship him, that is, to render him *external* Homage and Reverence, our Saviour rejects the Motion with an *it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matth. iv. 10. which Words must be understood of *external* as well as *internal* Worship, otherwise his Answer is no wise *pertinent* to the Devil's Proposals, which extended only to *external* Worship and Adoration.

And as *bodily* Worship is enjoyned by express *Precept*, so it is warranted by the concurrent *Examples* of all holy Men; for in the *Old Testament* you have almost as many *Examples* of it, as there are *Instances* of *devout* and *religious* Persons: and so observant were the Jews of all *external Reverence* in their *Religious Exercises*, that to *fall down* and *kneel before the Lord our Maker* seems to have been *Proverbial* of their Prayers and Publick Worship. And lest any Man should imagine these *bodily Reverences* to have been Part of that *Ceremonial Worship* that was *abolish'd* by the Gospel, there are sufficient *Examples* of it recorded in the *New Testament* both to excite and warrant our *Imitation*. For even the blessed *Jesus* himself who thought it *no Robbery to be equal with God*, yet being in the *Form of a Servant*, he thought it no scorn to *kneel* and *prostrate* himself before him; for thus when he was in his last Agony, it is said, that *he fell on his face, and prayed*, Matth. xxxvi. 39. which in those Eastern Countries was a Signification of the *profoundest Reverence*: and afterwards when having awoke his Disciples, he returned to his Prayer again, St. *Luke* tells us that he *fell upon his knees and prayed*, Luke xxii. 41. Thus of St. *Stephen*, when he was breathing out his Soul in that hearty Prayer for his Enemies, it is said that *he kneeled*
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down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge, Acts vii. 60. So also St. Peter, when he came to raise *Tabitha* from the dead, is said to kneel down and pray, Acts ix. 40. And St. Paul acquainting the *Ephesians* how earnestly he prayed for them, thus expresses himself; *for this Cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Ephes. iii. 14. And when he was going to *Rome*, and had taken his last Farewel of the Brethren at *Miletum*, it is said that he kneeled down, and prayed with them, Acts xx. 36. And how loudly soever some of our new-fashioned Christians may explode external Reverence under a Pretence of worshipping God in a more spiritual Manner, it is certain that there never was any thing even externally more devout and solemn than the Religious Assemblies of the Primitive Christians; for generally at the Reading of their publick Liturgies, the whole Congregation kneeled down upon the bare Floor with their Heads uncovered, their Eyes lift up to Heaven, and their Hands stretched forth in fashion of a Cross; and then the whole Congregation being composed into a deep Silence, the Minister began the publick Service in a most serious and humble manner, not throwing about his Prayers at random with a clamorous, wild, and confused Voice, but pronouncing them with a most decorous

Calmness and *Modesty* : the People in the mean time demeaning themselves so *solemnly* and *uniformly*, that you would have thought the whole Assembly to have been animated with *one Soul*, and that Soul to have been nothing else but a *vital Sense* of the adorable Majesty and supereminent Perfections of God. So heavenly wide was the *Primitive* Pattern from the Rudeness and Irreverence of our *modern* Devotions, that I doubt not should those blessed Martyrs and Confessors of our *holy Religion* arise from their Graves, and come into our *publick Assemblies*, they would suspect that we met together rather to be *worshipp'd* by God than to *worship* him ; our usual Postures being much fitter for *Judges* than for *Supplicants*, and such as rather bespeak us to be receiving Petitions *from* God, than offering up Prayers *to* him. For what *Sign* do we give that we come to worship the *great Majesty* above, when we rudely squat upon our Seats with our Hats half on, as if we thought it too great a Condescension to *uncover* our Heads, and *kneel* before the *Lord our Maker* ; and that we made not bold enough with him, unless we treated him as our *Fellow*, and it were a piece of holy Familiarity to be *fauy* in our Language, and *irreverent* in our Addresses to him ?

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But by what hath been said I think it is apparent, that *bodily* Worship is of so much *Account* and *Necessity* in Religion, that to neglect it is a Piece of great *Injustice* to God, and an high *Affront* to his Majesty, whereunto we owe the *lowliest* Homage and Adoration. But after all it must be acknowledged, that unless our *bodily* Worship be attended with an *inward lively* Sense of God, with great and worthy *Thoughts* of him and suitable *Affections* towards him, it is all but a perfect *Pagantry*; which, tho' it makes a goodly *Shew*, hath nothing of *Substance* or *Reality* in it: Nay if by those *external* Reverences we render him, we do not express the *inward* Veneration of our Souls; while we pretend to *worship* him, we *mock* him to his Face; and by offering him a *Shell* which hath no *Kernel* in it, we only seek to put a Trick upon him, to make him believe we *honour* and *adore* him, when in reality we do but more demurely *flout* him, and with our *Mock-Obeysances* affront him with greater Ceremony: If therefore we do not bow our *Hearts* before him as well as our *Knees*, in our most solemn Addresses to him, we are but so many liveless *Images* of Prayer, that, like our Grandfathers Statues on their Tombs, have our Hands and Eyes lift up to Heaven, but no *Soul* to animate our Devotions. But God expects that those that

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worship Him should approach him with *pure* and *humble* Minds, with their Wills inspired with *divine* Affections, and their Souls touched with an *over-awing* Sense of his Majesty; without which he accounts all our *bodily* Adorations to be nothing but *demure* Scorns, and *complemental* Mockeries; and therefore upon this very Account God denounced most fearful Judgments against *Israel*, because *they draw near him with their mouths, and with their lips did honour him, when their hearts were removed far from him,* Isa. xxix. 13.

Sixthly, and lastly, Another sort of *bodily* Exercise that is of *some*, tho' but *little* Account in Religion, is a mere outward *Form* or *Round* of Religious Duties, such as *saying* of our Prayers, *hearing* the Word of God, and *receiving* of Sacraments, and the like; which are all of them expressly enjoined by the Christian Religion, as the *Means* by which we are to purge our Minds from all *Impurity* and *Wickedness*, and to acquire those *divine Habits* of Piety and Virtue, which are necessary to qualify us for *eternal Life*: And without all doubt, such *Means* they are as, if *rightly* used, will by the Blessing of God, and their own natural Efficacy, exceedingly *conduce* to those great and worthy *Ends* for which they were ordained. For what *Means* can be more conducive to our Reformation
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and Amendment, than *constant* and *diligent* Prayer? for, besides that hereby we *move* God to enable us to our Duty by his own *Grace* and *Assistance*; by these our solemn Addresses to him we take an effectual Course to *abstract* our Minds from *carnal* and *sensitive* Things; to *excite* and *raise* our Affections towards God, and inspire our Souls with an awful Sense of his Majesty; which are the most *rational* Antidotes we can take against the venomous Temptations of *Sin*. How necessary is it to make us thoroughly good, that we should seriously and diligently attend upon the *Preaching* and *publick Ministers* of God's Word; the great *End* of which is to state and describe the *Bounds* of Christian Duty, and to explain and enforce those mighty Motives which Christianity urges to oblige us to it? both which are indispensably *necessary* to our Reformation; because a Man cannot be *good*, unless he *knows* his Duty, and when he *knows* it, he will not be *good*, unless he be *persuaded* to it. What can be more conducive to our *Growth* and *Progress* in all *Christian* Grace and Virtue, than frequent *Receiving* of the Holy Sacrament? which, besides as it is a Channel and Conveyance of the Divine Grace and Assistance to all *worthy* Communicants, doth *sensibly* represent to us one of the mightiest Arguments to *Obedience* in all the Christian Religion, *viz.* the *Death* and

and *Sacrifice* of our blessed Redeemer. For here we see his bloody Tragedy acted before our Eyes, the breaking of his *Body* and the pouring out of his *Blood* for us being *visibly* represented to us ; which dismal Spectacle (if we have any Remains of Ingenuity in us) cannot but *affect* us both with Love to *Him* who suffered so deeply for us, and with Horror against our *Sins*, which brought those *Sufferings* upon Him : and being thus affected, how can we forbear vowing *Revenge* upon our *Sins*, and perpetual *Obedience* to our most loving Redeemer, which is one great End of this *sacred Festival* ? So that these *outward Duties* are not only *necessary*, as they are *enjoined* by our Religion, but also as they are *effectual Means* and Instruments of that *internal Piety* and Virtue, which our Religion doth *principally* require and design : and therefore doubtless it cannot but be a great *Sin* for any Christian to live in the *ordinary Neglect* of these *instrumental Duties*, because in so doing he doth not only *affront* the Authority of that holy Religion to which he hath vowed *Submission* and *Obedience*, but also rejects the *Means* of his own *Recovery* and *Reformation*, and so doth openly declare himself a *reckless profligate Creature*, one that neither *is* good, nor ever *intends* to be so. But yet after all it must be acknowledged, that he that *only* prays,

prays, and hears, and receives Sacraments, and places *all* his Religion in a perpetual Round of these *outward* Performances, hath nothing of the *Life* and *Spirit* of true Religion in him: For, as I have already observed to you, these *Duties* are intended only for *Means* and *Instruments* of that *internal* Purity of Mind, and those *Divine* and *Godlike* Dispositions of Soul, wherein the *Life* and *Substance* of Religion doth consist. Now you know it is not barely the using of *Means* that either *is* or *doth* Good, but the using them to some good *End* or *Purpose*: as for instance, *Books* are *Means* and *Instruments* of *Learning*; but it is not *barely* the using of Books, or turning over the Leaves of them, that will make Men *wise* or *learned*; but the using them so, as to *understand* the Contents of them, and acquaint our selves with the *Things* and *Notions* contained in them. Thus *Prayer*, and *Hearing* the Word of God, and *Receiving* of Sacraments, are doubtless excellent *Means* to make Men *good* and *virtuous*; but *barely* to use them, without any *farther* Intention, is to do a thing that signifies *nothing*, that neither is good in it *self*, nor will do any good to *us*: If we would use them to any *Purpose*, we must use them to the *End* they are designed for, or else we had as good not use them at all. For we may as soon become good *Scholars* barely by turning
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over the *Leaves* of learned Books, as we shall good *Christians* barely by *praying*, and *hearing*, and *receiving*. If we do not *pray* to the End we may be more *humble* and *heavenly-minded*; if we do not *hear*, and *receive* Sacraments to the End, we may be more *just* and *charitable* and *meek* and *temperate*; we take a great deal of Pains to no purpose. For tho' a Hammer and a File are excellent Tools to make a Watch or a Clock, or any such curious Machin; yet doubtless you would account that Man extremely impertinent that should reckon himself a skilful Mechanick meerly because he knocks and files with them. And by the same Rule, tho' *Prayers* and *Sacraments* are excellent *Instruments* of Christian *Piety* and *Virtue*, yet it is a ridiculous Vanity for a Man to esteem himself a good Christian, meerly because he *prays* and *communicates*; because as the Art of the Mechanick consists not barely in using his Tools, but in using them so, as to perfect and accomplish his Work with them; so the *Virtue* of a *Christian* consists not barely in *Praying*, *Hearing*, and *Receiving*, but in using these Duties with that Religious *Art* and *Skill*, as is necessary to render them *effectually* subservient to the Ends of *Piety* and *Virtue*; and unless we use them to these Ends, we were as good not use them at all for any Benefit we are likely to reap from them.

them. For what doth it signify for a Man to *confess* his Sins to God, if he only go round in a Circle of *confessing* and *sinning*, and *sinning* and *confessing* again? Is it any Pleasure to the Almighty, do we think, to hear us read over, with tragical Looks and woful Tones, the odious Catalogue of our uncanceled Guilts? is he so fond of the Affronts and Injuries we do him, as to take delight in hearing them recounted? No, doubtless, it is impossible. 'Tis true, he hath commanded us to *confess* our Sins to him; but why hath he done so? why, that our *Confession* might be instrumental to our *Reformation*; that it might affect us with *Shame* and *Sorrow* for our Sins, and *Horror* and *Indignation* against them; and if this be not the *Effect* of it, we do but blazon our *Shame*, when we confess our *Sins*, and prefer a Bill of *Indictment* against our selves. To what purpose do we daily offer up our *Prayers* unto God, if we do not endeavour by our *Lives* to please him? Can we imagine him so easie a Sovereign as to be soothed and flattered with the humble *Petitions* and *Intreaties* of open and avowed *Rebels*? Certainly if we do, we are infinitely mistaken: he bids us *pray* to him indeed, but why? why, that by our *constant* Addresses to him we might be always affected with so deep a Sense of his *Sovereignty* over us and our *own* *Depen-*

dance upon him, as might keep us continually in *Awe* of Him; and if this be not the *Effect* of our *Prayers*, we only talk to the Air, and spend our Breath to no purpose. To what End do we praise God, and make Rhetorical *Acknowledgments* of his *Glory* and *Goodness*, if we do not *imitate* him in those *Perfections* for which we admire and laud him? Do we think so *wise*, so *great* a Being can ever be pleased and tickled to hear himself *extolled* and *commended* by a little of that fading Breath which *himself* gave being to? alas! no; he needs not our *poor Praises* to emblazon and magnify him, being *infinitely glorious* in his own *Perfections*, and a sufficient Stage and Theatre to *Himself*. 'Tis true he bids us *praise* him, but why? why, that he might provoke us to *imitate* what we do *commend*, and to transcribe into our *own selves* those adorable *Perfections* which we laud and admire in *Him*; and if this be not the *Effect* of our *praising* him, all the Good we say of him is nothing but *Flattery* and *Complement*. To what purpose do we come to Church to *hear* Sermons and pious Exhortations, if we do not *live* them too? Do we think to *please* God by meeting together to gratify our *Ears* or *Curiosity* with some new Notions, or quaint Piece of Oratory? If we do, we are much mistaken. He hath *commanded* us indeed, diligently to attend the publick

publick *Preaching* and *Ministers* of Religion; and why hath he done so, but only that we might *learn* his Will, and be *instructed* in the Motives to Obedience? And if this be not the *Effect* of our Hearing, we had as good spend our time in hearing the whistling of the Wind, or the roaring of the Sea. In a word, to what *End* do we receive the holy *Sacrament*, if we do not improve in Virtue by it? Do you think to please an *All-wise* God by eating a little *Bread*, and drinking a little *Wine*, in a devout and humble *Posture*? Is it likely that so *wise* a Being should be taken with such an *insignificant* Trifle? 'Tis true, He hath instituted this holy Solemnity for a *perpetual* Memory of our Saviour's Passion; but is this all do you think? Has he commanded us to meet, and eat and drink together, only to *remember* that a great while ago the blessed *Jesus* was crucified at *Jerusalem*? no, doubtless; that which he *ultimately* designed by this solemn Memorial was to inflame our *Love*, to confirm our *Faith*, and strengthen our Resolutions of *Obedience*; and if this be not the *Effect* of it, our receiving the *Sacrament* is of no more Account in Religion, than if we should eat and drink only to satisfy our *Hunger* and *Thirst*. This I have the longer intited upon, because it is so ordinary for Men to place all their Religion

ligion in these *instrumental Duties*, and to believe themselves highly in favour with God, *meerly* because they *pray* very often, and hear a great many *Sermons*, and are constant Communicants at the *Lord's Table* ; when God knows all this is only the Religion of the *Means*, and is good only as it tends farther to produce in us a *divine Temper* of Mind, and to make us *sober*, and *righteous*, and *godly* in this present World ; which if it doth not effect, it doth nothing at all, but is altogether *vain* and *insignificant*. Wherefore as you would not deceive and ruin you own Souls, beware of mistaking the *Means* of Godliness for *Godliness* it self, and of taking up you *Rest* there, where you should only *bait*, in order to a farther Progress ; least falling short of your *Duty*, you fall short of the *Reward* of it, and in the End receive your Portion with Hypocrites in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone.

2. Having shewed what that *bodily Exercise* is which profits *something* in Religion tho', compared with Godliness it self, but *very little* ; I now proceed to the second thing proposed, which was to shew you in what *Respects* it is that this *bodily Exercise* doth profit but *little*. In general it profits but *little* in respect of those *great* and *noble* Ends

Ends which Religion doth most principally aim at: for there are four *great* Advantages which Religion doth principally design and intend us:

1. To *reconcile* us unto God;
2. To *perfect* our Natures;
3. To *intitle* us to Heaven;
4. To *qualify* us for Heaven;

And to each of these, these kinds of *bodily* Exercise are no farther *profitable* than as they conduce to a *holy Life* and *internal Purity* and Goodness; which is that alone by which these *great* Advantages are to be obtained: so that tho' they profit *something*, yea very *much*, as they are *Means* of Godliness, yet compared with Godliness *it self*, they profit but very *little*; because these are only *instrumental* to make us godly, but it is *Godliness alone* that *reconciles* us unto God, and *perfects* our Natures, and *qualifies* us for Heaven. In these four Respects therefore these kinds of *bodily* Exercise do, in comparison with *Godliness*, profit but very *little*.

1. As to the *reconciling* us to God. 'Tis true, this *bodily* Religion is *instrumental* to reconcile us unto God, so far as it tends to *purify* our Minds, and to *inspire* us with a divine and God-like Nature, but farther than this, it hath no Influence at all upon it; for there is nothing can *reconcile* God to us; or us to God, but only a *mutual Likeness*

and Agreement. While we continue in our *Sins*, we cannot love God, *our Nature* being repugnant to *His*, who is infinitely *holy*, and *pure*, and *good*; nor can *He* love *us*, *His Nature* being repugnant to *ours*, which is *vile*, and *wicked*, and *unreasonable*. And how can two *Natures* be *reconciled*, which have such mutual *Antipathies* to each other? How can we *love* him whilst we are so prevalently *averse* to all that is *lovely* and *amiable* in Him, and so *unreasonably fond* of every thing that *He hates* and *abhors*? Doubtless while there is such a *Contrariety* between God and us, it is impossible we should *love* him without *hating* our selves. Hence the Apostle tells us, that the *carnal Mind* is not only an enemy, but that it is *enmity it self* to God, Rom. viii. 7. It is *Spight* and *Rancor* in the *Abstract*, being as repugnant to *His pure and holy Nature*, as *Heaven* is to *Hell*, or *Light* to *Darkness*. And the same Apostle gives us an Account of this *Enmity*, and shews us from whence it doth arise, Col. i. 21. *And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works*: These are the *Make-baits* that infuse into our Souls a secret *Enmity* to God, by inspiring them with *such Dispositions* as are altogether repugnant to the *Purity* and *Holiness* of his Nature; and there is nothing will *extinguish* these wicked *Dispositions*,
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from whence our *Enmity* to God doth arise, but only the *contray* Habits of *Virtue* and true *Goodness*. So that all our *bodily* Exercises in Religion do no otherwise tend to *reconcile* our Minds to God, than as they are *instrumental* to destroy the Body of *Sin* in us, and to beget in us a *Divine* and *Godlike* nature; which if they do not effect, they will *leave* us at as great a distance from God as ever they *found* us; and after all our *Professions*, and *bodily* Severities, our *rapturous* Passions in Religion, and *fluent* Strains of Devotion; after our *Hearing*, and *Praying*, and *Receiving* of Sacraments, we shall be found as utter *Enemies* to God as ever we were before: For there is nothing can *reconcile* the Mind of a Man to God, but only a *thorough* Conformity and *Agreement* in Nature with him. And as we cannot be *reconciled* to God without being *Godly*, so neither can God be *reconciled* to us. 'Tis true he bears a hearty *Good-will* to all his Creation, and earnestly *desires* the Welfare of every Being that he hath made capable of any degree of *Happiness*; and there is no Man whatsoever excluded from this his *universal* Benevolence, which with outstretched Arms embraces the *whole* Creation: But it is impossible he should *love* any, so as to be *pleased* with or *delighted* in them, but only those that are *good*; for tho' his

Love be terminated upon *infinite* Objects, yet it is founded upon *unchangeable* Reason, and that is *true Goodness*, which is the *only* Motive of *wise* and *reasonable* Love. Thus he loves Himself, not purely because he is Himself; for that would be rather an *Instinct*, than a *reasonable* Love; but because he is good: and he loves Himself above all other Things, not out of a blind *unreasonable* Fondness to himself, but because he knows Himself to be the *highest* and *most perfect* Good. And if upon an impossible *Supposition*, he were *less* good than he is, he would doubtless love himself *less* than he doth; but because his *own Essence* is the *fairest* Copy, and *most perfect* Idea of Goodness; therefore if he love *reasonably*, he must love himself *most*; and consequently love all other things *proportionably* as they *approach* and *resemble* Himself in *Goodness*, and *Purity*, and *Holiness*. For if he love himself *best*, because he is *most* good, he must necessarily love all other things *proportionably* as they are *more* or *less* good; and indeed he could not love Himself *infinitely*, should he love *us* for any *other* Reason, but that for which he loves *Himself*: For he can love Himself no farther than he hath Reason for it; and therefore if he had *other* Reasons to love *us*, beyond what he hath to love *Himself*, he would not love Him-
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self *infinitely*; because he would not have *infinite Reason* for it. So that it is plain, God loves *Himself* and *us* for the *same* general Reason. And as he doth not love *Himself*, but because he is *good*; so he doth not love *us*, meerly because we are such and such Men, out of a peculiar *Fondness* to our individual Persons; but because we *resemble* Him in that *Goodness* and *Purity* for which he loves *Himself*. For one of these three things we must say, That either God loves us for *no Reason* at all, which would be a degrading of his most *wise* Love into a *foolish* Fondness; or else that he loves us for our *Sins*, which would be to make him love *different* Objects, *Himself* and *us*, upon *contrary* Reasons; or that he loves us for our *Goodness*, and *Conformity* to his own most *pure* and *perfect* Nature. This therefore is that *alone*, that will *reconcile* God to us, and without this all our *empty* Religion is *insignificant*. Tho' we should profess Religion with the *Constancy* of *Monks*, and our whole Lives were a continued *Rapture* of Religious *Passions*; tho' we should cast our selves into *Skeletons*, and pray till our Knees clave to the ground; tho' we should live upon *Sacraments*, and hear as many *Sermons* as there are hours in the Day; yet if upon *all this* we do not grow more *amiable* and *benignant*, more *like* God than

Perate, more *humble* and *heavenly minded*, it will be all to no *purpose*; for when all is done, there is nothing but *true Goodness* can in dear us to the *good God*. So that it is apparent, that notwithstanding all our *bodily Exercises*, so long as we continue in our *Sins*, there is so vast a *Gulf* between God and us, that neither we can go to *Him*, nor he come to *us*; and, unless God alters *his Nature* by becoming *impure* as we are *impure*, or we alter *ours* by becoming *pure* as *He* is *pure*, so *immense* is the Distance between him and us, that it is impossible we should ever *meet* and *agree*. What the Prophet therefore says of Sacrifice, may be said of all *bodily Religion*, *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams or ten thousand rivers of Oil?* Will he be reconciled with zealous Professions, fluent Prayers, or melting Passions? no, no; *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.* And what doth the Lord require of thee, *but to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*, Micah vi. 7, 8.

2. *Bodily Exercise* profits but little in comparison with *Charities*, as to the *perfecting* of our *Natures*. 'Tis true, this *bodily Exercise* is *instrumental* of our *Perfection*, so far as it promotes in us the *Virtues of Godliness* and *Reason*; if it makes us *meek* and *humble*, and *just*, and *charitable*, and *temperate*.

if it inspires us with a *sincere* Love to God, and a *dutiful* Awe and Dread of his Majesty; if it produces in us a hearty *Submission* to his Will, and a constant Dependence upon his Truth and Goodness; then indeed it doth *effectually* conduce to the *Perfection* and *Accomplishment* of our Natures, it being productive of that wherein the *Perfection* of our Natures doth consist. But if *these* are not the Effects of it, we are never the better for it, and after all our *Hearing*, and *Praying*, and *Professing*, our Nature will be still as *man'd* and *imperfect* as ever it was before. For the *Perfection* of a Rational Nature consists not in *Forms* and *Outsides*, and such and such *bodily* Motions and *mechanical* Exercises of our Sense and Passion, but in being *wise* and *good*; in having our *Understandings* informed with the Principles of right Reason, and our *Wills* and *Affections* regulated by them. For to be a *perfect* Man, is to live up to the *highest* Principle of Humane Nature, and that is *Reason*; which is the proper Character of our Beings that *distinguishes* us from all *sublunary* Natures, and sets us in a *Form* of Being above them. When therefore we are released from the Slaveries of *Sense* and *Passion*, and all our Powers are perfectly subdued to this *superior* Principle, as to do every thing that it *commands*, and nothing that it *forbids*,
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and we choose and refuse, and love and hate, and hope, and fear, and desire, and delight, according as *right Reason* directs and dictates to us ; then, and not till then, we are come to the full *Stature* of *perfect Men* in *Christ Jesus*. Now what else is *Godliness*, but only an *Habit* of living according to the Laws of *Reason*, or an accustoming our selves in all our *Circumstances*, to do those Things that are most *fit* and *reasonable*; to demean our selves towards *God*, our *Selves*, and all the *World*, with that *Devotion*, *Sobriety*, and *Justice*, as becomes *Rational Beings* placed in our *Condition* and *Circumstances*? This is *Godliness*; and till we are in some measure arrived to *this*, our *Faculties* are wholly out of Joint, notwithstanding all our *bodily Religion*. For so long as we live in a state of *Sin*, we live in *Rebellion* to our own *Reason*, and the *Natural Polity* of our *Souls* is dissolved into a wild confused *Anarchy*. Our *Reason*, that was made to govern us, is enslaved by its own *Vassals*, and forced to truckle to our *Passions* and *Appetites*. The Law in our *Members* controuls the Law in our *Minds*, and countermands the Dictates of our *purest Reason*; and so our nature is turned upside-down, and the *Cardinal Points* of our *Motion* changed into quite contrary *Positions*. And so far is our Nature from being

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perfected without *Godliness*, that it is the most wretched *confused* thing in the whole World; a mere undistinguished *Chaos*, where *frigida cum calidis*, Sense and Reason, Brute and Man, are shuffled together in a heap of rude and undigested Ruins; and being in this *sick disorderly* Condition, what can recover us but only inuring and accustoming our selves to live *godlily*; or, which is all one, according to the Prescripts of *right Reason*? This, by degrees, will *re-advance* our *Reason* to its native Throne, and *reduce* our rebellious *Passions* and *Appetites* to a pure and *Spiritual* Mind: This will set our disjointed *Faculties* in order, and restore our decayed *Nature* to its *primitive* Health and Vigour. For by inuring our selves to a Life of *Reason*, our *Passions* and *Appetites* will by degrees be *tamed* and *civiliz'd*, so that at length it will be *natural* and *easy* to us; and then we shall chearfully go on from one degree of *Virtue* to another, till all the *Unevennesses* of our *Natures* are *filed off*, and our *Souls* are *polished* into living Images of the most perfect God, till we come to that heavenly permanent state of ever *knowing* and *doing* that which is *best* and *most reasonable*; and this is the utmost Pitch of *Perfection* that any reasonable *Nature* can aspire to. So that it is *Godliness* alone that doth perfect our *Natures*, and restore us to the

pure state of *reasonable* Beings. For to be *perfectly* godly is to be *perfectly conformable* to the eternal Laws of *Reason* ; and he that is so, is advanced to the utmost Pitch of *Perfection* that his reasonable Nature is capable of.

3. *Bodily* Exercise profits but *little* in comparison with *Godliness*, as to the *entitling* us to Heaven and eternal Life : For God hath been so gracious. as not only to *assure* us that there *is* a *Heaven* and future *Happiness*, but he hath also promised it to us upon certain Terms and Conditions, that so by *performing* these, we might not only believe that there is a *Heaven*, but also be inspired with a certain *Hope* of *enjoying* it. For upon our performing the *Condition* upon which Heaven is *promised* to us, we are vested with such an *inalienable* Right to it, as we can never be diseased of ; unless the God of Truth break his *Word*, which he can never do, until he ceases to be God. This therefore is one great Advantage which Religion doth design us, to beget in us such a *lively Hope* of that blessed *Imminortality* which it *promises* to us, as might carry us chearfully through all the *weary* Stages of our *Duty*, and support our Minds under all the *Calamities* of this present World. And without all doubt, the *Hope* of Heaven is the *greatest* Blessing that

that we are capable of on this side Heaven ; for if we had *all the World* before us, and *every Pleasure* of it were *distilled to a Quintessence* to feast our Desires and entertain our licorice Appetites, what a *poor inconsiderable Trifle* would it be, compared with the Hope of being transformed into the *Likeness of God*, and dwelling for ever in His *Presence*, there to spend a blissful Eternity with *Saints and Angels, Arch-angels and Seraphims*, in one continued *everlasting Act* of rapturous *Love and Joy*? What *mean things* are all the sickly Joys, the empty, flat, evanid Pleasures *this World* doth afford us, compared with the ravishing Pleasures and divine Contentments that spring from such *vast and mighty Hopes*? This *Hope of Heaven* therefore being so highly advantageous to us, God hath therefore *promised* it to us upon certain *Terms and Conditions*, that so we might have a *sure Foundation* to build our Hope upon; that we might know upon what *Grounds* we are to expect that blessed *Reward*, which we could never have done, had God left himself *free* to with-hold or bestow it upon us, according to the *arbitrary*, and, to us, *uncertain* Determinations of his Will, and not bequeathed it to us upon such Conditions by his own *irrevocable Promise*. That therefore which gives us a Right to Heaven, and is the only *true Ground*

Ground of our Hopes of it, is our performing the *Condition* upon which it is promised to us ; and the *Condition* upon which it is promised to us, is nothing less than *true* and *universal* Godliness. And hence the Apostle tells us, that *without holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. and our Saviour, in *Matth. v.* restrains the Beatitudes of the other World to those that are *pure in Spirit*, and *pure in Heart*, that are *benign* and *merciful*, that *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, and that endure the unjust Persecutions of the World with *Christian Patience*, and *Courage*, and *Constancy*. And the Promise of eternal Life is limited by the Apostle to those *who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*, Rom. ii. 7. And if *Godliness* be the *sole Condition* of eternal Life, then it necessarily follows, that all our *bodily Exercises* in Religion do no farther conduce to *entitle* us to it, than as they conduce to make us *godly* and *vertuous* ; which if they do not effect, they give us no more *Right* to Heaven, or *Ground* to hope for it, than the most *indifferent* Actions in the World. Hence our Saviour hath told us before hand, that we may know what to trust to, *Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven*, Matth.

vii. 21. that is, not every one that *professes* my Name, and *acknowledges* me for his Lord and Master, and makes solemn *Prayers* and *Addresses* to me, shall be admitted into the Kingdom of Happiness; such *outward bodily Exercises* as these will never *entitle* any Man unto that blessed Condition: Tho' you should *profess* my Name never so solemnly, and pray to me with never so much Fervor and Earnestness, yet do not think I will be brib'd by such Trifles to connive at your *Sins*, and admit you into Heaven notwithstanding all your *Impieties*; no, no; I do assure you before hand, that you may know what to trust to, that there is nothing but your *sincere* Submission unto the Will of my Father, shall ever persuade me to receive you into his *heavenly* Kingdom. Let us not therefore flatter our selves any longer with vain Expectances of Heaven, upon the account of our *bodily* Religion; for unless our Natures are *chang'd*, and our Minds *reformed* and *better'd* by it, we may as well lay *claim* to Heaven because we *eat* and *drink* and *sleep*, as because we *pray*, and *hear*, and *receive* Sacraments: For tho' these *bodily Exercises* are profitable *Means* to entitle us to Heaven, yet it is only upon this Account, because they are *Means* to make us *good*; but if they do not effect *this*, they are all but so many *insignificant* Cyphers. He therefore

fore that builds his Hope of Heaven meerly upon *bodily* Religion, builds upon a *sandy Foundation*, which if he finally trust to, will sink under him, and bury him in eternal Ruins.

4. And lastly, *Bodily* Exercise profits but *little* in comparison with *Godliness*, as to the *qualifying* us for Heaven; which is a distinct Consideration from the former. For supposing we could have a *Right* to Heaven, without being *disposed* and *qualify'd* for it, it would be no Advantage at all to us; for before we can enjoy Heaven, our *Minds* must be *reconciled* to the Pleasures and Delights of it, or else it is impossible they should be *Pleasures* to us. Now in the Temper of every wicked Mind there is a *natural* Antipathy unto all those *pure* and *spiritual* Joys wherewith the *heavenly* State abounds, which being *pure*, and *chaste*, and *refined*, can never agree with the *vitiated* Palate of a *base degenerate* Soul. For what Concord can there be between *spiteful* and *devilish* Spirits, and the Fountain of all *Love* and *Goodness*? between *sensual* and *carnalized* Souls that understand no other Pleasures but only those of the *Flesh*, and those *pure* and *virgin* Spirits that never eat nor drink, but live for ever upon *Wisdom*, and *Holiness*, and *Love*, and *Contemplation*? How could I be happy in seeing that God, whom I cannot

love;

love; in *conversing* with these Spirits, whose Genius and Temper I *abhor*; and in being for ever employed in those heavenly *Exercises*, to which I have the greatest Aversion; no, no; till I am of the same *Disposition* with those celestial Inhabitants, and my *Mind* is contempered to the heavenly State, it is impossible that *Heaven* and I should ever agree; and I *may* as well see without Eyes, or hear without Ears, as *enjoy* Heaven without a Heavenly *Disposition*. For as to the main, we shall be of the *same* Temper of *Mind* when we come into the *other* World, as we are of while we continue in *this*, it being unimaginable how our *Dispositions* should be totally *changed* meerly by passing out of one World into another; and therefore as in *this* World it is *Likeness* that doth *congregate* and *associate* Beings together, so doubtless it is in the *other* too: so that if we carry thither with us our wicked devilish *Dispositions*, (as we shall doubtless do, unless we subdue and mortify them here) there will be no *Company* fit for us to *associate* with, but only the Devils, and damned Ghosts of wicked Men; with whom our wretched Spirits being *already* joined by a *Likeness* of Nature, will be forced to *congregate*, as soon as ever they are excommunicated from the Society of Mortals. For whither should they flock but to the Birds

of their own Feather? Where should they join *Society*, but with those malignant Spirits to whom they are joined already by a *Community of Natures*? For supposing that when they are landed in Eternity, it were left to their own *Liberty* to go either to Heaven or Hell; yet Heaven would be no Place for them, the Air of that bright Empire of *eternal Day* would never agree with their *black* and *hellish* Natures; for alas! what should they do among those blessed Souls that inhabit it, to whose *Godlike* Natures, *divine* Conversations, and *heavenly* Employments, they have the greatest *Repugnancy* and *Aversion*? From hence therefore it is apparent, that to our *comfortable* Possession of Heaven it is not only necessary we should have a *Right* to it, but also that we should be *prepared* and *qualified* for it; and as to this, all our *bodily* Exercises in Religion are no farther profitable than as they are *effectual Means* of true substantial *Godliness*. For when the *Soul* goes out of this *Body*, it must leave all this *bodily* Religion behind it, and carry nothing with it into Eternity, but only those *divine Virtues* and *heavenly Dispositions*, which by the Means of this *bodily* Religion it did here acquire. For our *outward* Professions and *bodily* Severities and Passions, our *praying*, and *hearing*, and *receiving* of Sacraments, are all but Scaffolds

to this heavenly Building of *inward* Purity and Goodness; and when once this is finished for Eternity, then must these Scaffolds go down as Things of no farther Use or *Necessity*. But as for the Graces of the *Mind* they shall stand for ever as the only *fit* Habitations of the *heavenly* Pleasures; and therefore 'tis impossible that these our *bodily* Exercises should formally dispose our *Souls* for Heaven, since in Heaven they shall wholly *cease*. For altho' our *Love* and *Joy*, and all our *sweeter Affections*, shall there be kept in everlasting *Exercise*, yet shall they be wholly *refined* from all *bodily* Passion, because there we shall be stript into *naked* and *unbodied* Spirits, Our *Love* shall unite our *Wills* to God and the whole Choir of blessed Spirits, without any *warmth* of Spirit, or *Expansions* of Heart. Our *Joy* being purely the Jubilee of our *Minds* and the Recreation of our *Reason*, shall flow without Shouts or Noises in a most *sweet* but *silent* Current; and the whole Scene of our *Happiness* shall be transacted on the Stage of our *Reason*. There being therefore no room for *bodily* Exercise in this heavenly State, it is impossible we should be *qualified* by it for the *Enjoyment* of Heaven; but doubtless, our *Fitness* for Heaven must consist in such *inherent Qualities* of Mind as separate Souls may carry to Heaven with them; and what

these are, may be easily concluded by considering what the *Employment* of Heaven is ; which, so far as we are given to understand of it, consists in *contemplating* and *adoring* the Divinity, and in *conversing* with those pure and blessed Spirits that dwell for ever in his Presence. Now to make us *fit* for such an *Employment*, the *only necessary* Qualities of Mind are an universal *Love*, and a profound *Humility*, which two are the *fundamental* Virtues of Religion, of which all the other Virtues are so many different *Operations*. 'Tis true, our *Love* and *Humility* will not have all the *same* Operations in the *other* World as they have in *this*, because there we shall not have the *same* Occasions for them ; for being placed above all *Sufferings* in the Enjoyment of the most *perfect* Good, we shall have no occasion either for the *passive* Vertues of *Patience*, and *Meekness*, and *Forgiveness* of Injuries ; nor yet for those *active* Vertues which speak us distant from our Happenings, such as *Faith* and *Hope*, which shall be swallow'd up in *Vision* and *Feeling*. But tho' in that *blest* State we shall have no occasion to express our *Love* and *Humility* in such Acts as there, yet without these two great Vertues we shall be no way *capable* of the *heavenly* Employment ; for what Pleasure can we take in *contemplating* the Being of God, if we do not

love Him? Doubtless our own *Antipathy* to the *Goodness* and *Purity* of His Nature will either avert our Eyes from *beholding* him, or render the Sight of him *horrible* and *dreadful* to us. And if we do not *contem-plate* him with an *humble* and *lowly* Mind, the *Sight* of his supereminent Perfections will either provoke our *Envy* or *Contempt*, make us *pine* to see our selves out-shone by him, or *contemn* his Glories out of an overweening Opinion of our own. Again, if we do not *love* God, we cannot *adore* him with a *free* and *cheerful* Mind; and if we are *proud* and *self-conceited*, instead of God we shall adore our *Selves*, and become our own *Idols* and *Votaries*. So that without *Humility* and *Love* we shall be no ways fit for the other part of that sweet Employment which consists in *conversing* with holy and blessed Spirits; for *their* Conversation being wholly regulated by the sacred Laws of *wise* and *holy* Friendship, and consisting in an everlasting Intercourse of *chaste* and *mutual* Indearments; no Soul can be *capable* of bearing a *Part* in it that is not inspired with universal *Love* and great *Humility*, both which are *indispensably* necessary to every *wise* and *friendly* Conversation. For where *Humility* is wanting, every *Trifle* will *offend*; and where *Charity* is wanting, every *Offence* will kindle an unquenchable *Discord*. So that

proud malicious Nature can converse no where with Satisfaction, much less with those blessed Souls, in whose most *pure* and *perfect* Friendship there is not the least Intermixture either of *Flattery* or *Envy*; for being all perfectly *good*, and perfectly *happy*, they can neither *over-value* themselves, nor *envy* what another enjoys; so that in all *their* Conversation there is no Entertainment either for *Pride* or *Malice*, but on the contrary there is nothing but what is *disasteful* to them: for where there are none that *over-value* either themselves or others, but every one loves every one with a *sincere* and *invio-*
lable Friendship, there can be no Conversation but what is *disasteful* to an *arrogant* and *malicious* Temper. What then should a *proud malignant* Spirit do among those *happy* Beings, a great part of whose Heaven consists in *rejoycing* in *each others* Happiness? Doubtless could such a Spirit be admitted into their Society, their Bliss would so *enrage* its *Envy*, their Perfection so *upbraid* its Baseness, that it would find nothing but Causes of *Discontent* in a Conversation so *disagreeable* to its Nature: so that without universal *Love* and *profound* Humility, there is nothing in Heaven that we can *enjoy*; there being *no Employment* in that blessed State that is *agreeable* to the Genius of a *proud* and *malicious* Mind. So that unless

our *bodily* Religion doth make us *really good* by begetting in us those heavenly Virtues of *Humility* and *Love*, it is altogether *impertinent* as to the disposing of us for Heaven; and after all our *fasting*, and *praying*, and *hearing*, and *receiving* of Sacraments, we shall be found as remote from Heaven, and as unprepared for it, as if we had spent our time in gathering Cockles, or telling the Sands upon the Sea-shore. So that tho' this *bodily* Exercise be highly *useful* and *necessary* to our Reformation and Amendment, and is in it self a very *conducive Means* to *internal Holiness* and *Goodness*; yet compared with *Godliness* it self, wherein our *Holiness* and *Goodness* doth consist, it is of very *little Account*, either as to the *reconciling* us to God, or the *perfecting* our Natures, or to the *entitling* us to Heaven, or *qualifying* us for it.

Now from hence we may learn, what the *true End* is of *external* and *bodily* Religion: It is not required for its *own sake* without any farther End or Intention, but for the sake of *Godliness*, which is the *ultimate Mark* at which it ought to be levelled and directed. And therefore as he that would build an House must make use of the *Means*, the *Tools* and *Materials* of Building; but if he think to build the House *meerly* by using

these Means, by cutting the Wood and carving in Stone, without any farther Aim or Intention, he will find himself extreamly mistaken : so he that would be *godly* must use the *Means* of Godliness ; he must *profess* the true Religion, and *pray*, and *hear*, and *receive* Sacraments ; but he that thinks he is *godly* meerly because he uses these *Means*, tho' he doth not at all concern himself to direct them unto the great *End* for which they were designed, doth but *deceive* and *abuse* his own Soul. For, for God's sake, what doth it signify for a Man to *pray* in his Family, and afterwards to go and *cheat* in his Shop ? to keep the Lord's Day strictly, and play the Knave all the Week after ? What doth it avail for a Man to *hear* the Word of God, if he make no Conscience of *obeying* it ? to receive the Sacrament of *Charity*, if he still retain *Hatred* and *Ill-will* to his Neighbours ? Do we think that God is so fond of these *instrumental* Duties of Religion, as for *their* sakes to dispense with these *gross* and *fulsome* Immoralities ? No, no ; these are things only fit to cheat Children and Fools withal. But let us not imagine, that the *wise* and *holy* God will be so imposed upon ; that when he hath ordained these *Duties* only as the *Means* of acquiring that universal *Purity* and *Goodness* which he principally *intends* and *requires*, he will be

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contented *barely* with your using these *Means*, whether the great Ends for which he designed them be ever obtained by you or no. If you should enjoin your Servant to copy out such a Letter or Manuscript, and for that End should require him to use Pen, Ink, and Paper; would you not think him extreamly absurd or insolent, should he come and shew you a large insignificant Scribble, and tell you that according to your Command he had used the Pen, Ink, and Paper, tho' indeed he had not transcribed one Word with them of what you did command and enjoin him? And yet thus *rudely* and *insolently* do you deal by God, who place *all* your Religion in the *instrumental* Duties of it. God doth require of you that you should copy out his *Justice*, *Purity*, and *Goodness*, and transcribe them into your *own* Natures; and in order to your doing of this, he hath prescribed you certain *Means* and *Instruments*, such as *Prayer*, and *Hearing*, and *receiving* of Sacraments; and when you come to give him an account of that mighty Task he hath enjoined you, you shew him an insignificant *Flourish* of Religion, and have nothing to say for your selves but that according to his Appointment you have *prayed*, and *heard*, and *received* Sacraments; but you must confess that with all these you have not transcribed one Tittle or *Lot* of that
Purity

Purity and Holiness which he required at your hands. Is this a *proper* account, do you think, to be given to the *wise* and *holy* Sovereign of the World? Would you be thus mocked by your own Servants? And dare you presume thus to mock the great God, between *whom* and *you* there is infinitely a greater distance than between *you* and the *meanest* Vassal about you? In the Name of God, for what End do you pray? Is it to *please* him with a fine Speech, or an humble and eloquent Address? Or is it to *persuade* him by your fawning Submissions to befriend you in all your Wickedness and Rebellion against him? If *either* of these be your Aims, I must plainly tell you, you were as good save your Breath for some other purpose; but if you pray to him upon a *sincere* Design, to affect your Minds with an *awful* Sense of God, and to obtain of him *Grace* to enable you to repent and amend, and for *Pardon* and *Mercy* upon your unfeigned Repentance; then your *Prayer* must necessarily make you more *meek*, and *humble*, and *industrious* to please him by a *free* and *generous* Obedience. To what purpose do you come to *hear* the Word of God? Do you think it gratifies the Almighty that you will please to give him the *Hearing*? Or that you meet in the publick Assemblies to furnish your Heads with *Notions* and

and your Tongues with *Discourse*? If this be your Opinion, I must needs tell you, you have very *mean* Apprehensions of God, to think him a Being capable to be pleased with such a *mean* and *inconsiderable* Trifle: but, if you come with *humble, honest, and teachable* Minds to *learn* the Will of God in order to your *obeying* it, your *hearing* will necessarily lead you to the *practice* of all those excellent Virtues which God requires at your hands. What do you design when you *receive* the Sacrament? is it to please God with offering *Vows* to him, which you do not mean to *perform*, to pacify him with a short Pang of *religious Passion*, with shedding a few *Tears* over your bleeding Saviour; or to get your *Pardon* sealed with the Blood of the Covenant without *Repentance* and *Reformation*? If so, I must needs tell you, you *receive* the Sacrament to no other purpose, but only to *deceive* and *abuse* your own Souls. But if you come with an *honest* Design to *remember* the great things that your Saviour hath done for you; to *excite* your Love to him with the Spectacle of his Passion, and to *renew* your Communion with the Saints, and your Vows of Obedience unto God; you will then infallibly be made *better* by it, and be more and more accomplish'd in every part of *true* and *real* Goodness. So that unless we perform this *outward*
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and *bodily* Religion to the Purposes of *true* *Godliness*, we perform it to no purpose at all. Let me therefore besceeh you, even for God's sake and your own Souls, do not rest in this *bodily* Religion, think not that you have done *enough*, when you have *fasted* and *prayed*, *heard* and *received* Sacraments; for if you do, you are short of your *Duty*, and will infallibly fall short of the *Reward* of it. These Things indeed we must by no means *neglect*, they being the necessary *Means* and *Instruments* of our Reformation; but if we do not use them as *such*, we take a great deal of Pains to no purpose; if they do not render us more *humble* and *charitable*, more *sober* and *heavenly-minded*, we have spent all our Labour in vain, and in the End shall have no other *Reward* for it but the Portion of *Hypocrites* in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

EZEKIEL

EZEKIEL XVIII. 30.

Repent and turn your selves from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin.

THE great Design of this Chapter is to answer an Objection which the *Jews* were wont to make against the *Righteousness* of God's Procedure with them; *viz.* That he punished them not only for their *own*, but for their *Fathers* Sins. Which Objection, tho' it did not at all impeach the *Righteousness* of God, it being no Injustice in Him to inflict temporal Evils upon the *Children* for their *Fathers* Sins; yet that they might urge it no more as a Pretence of Gods *unrighteous* dealing with them, God assures them by his *Prophet* that from thenceforth he would *remit* that Right he had to make them smart for their *Fathers* Iniquities, and inflict no other Punishment upon them than what was due for their own *personal* Faults; that if they did well, they should *fare* well, notwithstanding the Sins of their *Parents*; and that if they did *wickedly*, they should surely smart for it, how well soever their *Parents* behaved themselves. Nay, says he, your *Father*.

Fathers Merit or Demerit shall henceforth be so far from excusing you *from*, or exposing you *to* Punishment, that you shall not suffer for your own past *Wickedness*, if you *repent* of it, nor yet escape for your past *Righteousness* if you *revolt* from it. This is the Sum of the whole *Chapter* to the 24th Verse: and yet, says he, *the house of Israel* says, *the way of the Lord is not equal*. O house of Israel are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Can any method of *rewarding* and *punishing* be more equal than this which I now propose? or can any Accusation be more *injurious* than this of yours against me? but know, 'tis not your *unjust* reproaches shall make me desist from this my most *righteous* procedure. Therefore, says he Verse the 30th. I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways; how much soever you reproach and calumniate me, I will strictly insist upon this method of *rewarding* and *punishing* you according as you *repent* of, or persevere in your Iniquities; and to let you see that I will be as ready to *reward* you upon the *former*, as to *punish* you upon the *latter*, do but for once make a tryal of me, *repent and turn your selves from all your transgressions*, and you shall surely find that *your past iniquity shall not be your ruin*. The sense of which Words resolves into two Propositions:

I. That

1. That the *Iniquity* of any People or Nation tends directly to their *Ruine*.

2. That true *Repentance* and *Amendment* is the certain way to prevent the *Ruine* which *Iniquity* tends to.

I begin with the first, that the *Iniquity* of any People or Nation tends directly to their *Ruine*: So it shall not --- intimating that if they did not *repent* their *Iniquity* would certainly end in their *Ruine*. And of the *Truth* of this the constant Experience of all *Ages* is a sufficient Testimony; for if you consult either sacred or prophane *History*, you will find that *Iniquity*, like the Worm at the root of *Jonah's* gourd, hath many times blasted the most flourishing *Kingdoms*, pulled down their *Banks*, and laid them open to such *Inundations* of Misery, as have finally *overwhelm'd* and *destroy'd* them. And those that have made the strictest Enquiries into humane Affairs have constantly observed that the *Rise* and *Fall* of Nations hath been more owing to their *Virtue* and *Vice* than to any other Cause, and that upon these two Hinges generally the Fates of *Empires* turn; that the Foundations of their *Rise* were laid in *virtuous*, *brave*, and *generous* Actions, and that by *Wickedness* and *Corruption* of Manners they were *undermined*, and sunk into a *final Ruine*. But the Truth of this will yet more fully appear by considering

ing how many ways *Vice* doth contribute to the *Ruine* and *Destruction* of a Kingdom; all which I shall reduce to these eight Heads:

1. It doth it by depriving Kingdoms and Nations of the *Favour* and *Protection* of God.

2. By inflicting positive *Plagues* and *Punishments* upon them.

3. By corrupting and infatuating their *Counsels*.

4. By melting and emasculating their *Courage*.

5. By breaking and disturbing their *Order*.

6. By dissolving their *Unity* and *Concord*.

7. By consuming their *Wealth* and *Substance*,

8. By debasing their *Esteem* and *Reputation*.

1. *Wickedness* directly tends to the *Ruine* of Kingdoms and Nations, as it deprives them of the *Divine Favour* and *Protection*. For if we acknowledge God to be the *Almighty Lord* and *Sovereign* of the World, we cannot but confess that the *Strength* and *Establishment* of Kingdoms is founded in His *Favour* and *Protection*; that his *Goodness*, *Wisdom*, and *Power* are the Pillars upon which those vast and mighty *Structures* lean; and

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patronize them in the *one*, and take their part against the *other* : and if he *withdraw* his upholding Providence from a Nation, he needs do *no more* ; for now it *must* sink of its own accord, and like a *falling* House, when its prop is removed, its Weight will bear it down and quickly crush it into Ruines.

2. *Wickedness* tends to the *Ruine* of Kingdoms and Nations not only by engaging God to *withdraw* his protection from, but also to *inflict* positive *Plagues* and *Punishments* upon them. For God being the supreme *Sovereign* of the World, and especially of this World of *Men* who are so extremely *prone* to contemn and violate the Laws of his *Government*, it is necessary that since our *Hopes* and *Fears* are the master-springs of all our Motions, he should take especial Care, as on the one hand to *allure* us to our Duty by the Hope of *Reward*, so on the other to *awe* us into it by the Fear of *Punishment* ; and if he should not, there would be no confining such extravagant Creatures, as we are, within any Rule or Compass. Now as for *particular* Offenders, the great Scene of God's *Rewarding* and *Punishing* them is the *future* State, where every Man must answer for himself and receive the just Retributions of his own Actions ; but as for sinful and vertuous Nations, they

they are capable only of being rewarded and punished in *this Life*; there being no such thing as *particular Nations* and *Kingdoms* in the *Life to come*; where *Heaven* and *Hell* are the two *Nations* into which the *Spirits of Men* are distributed; so that if wicked *Nations* were not punished *here* as such, they could never be punished at all. And if there were no such *Punishments* set up like *Banks* and *Shores* to break the *Insolence* and check the overflowing *Wickedness* of *Sinners*, the whole *World* would soon become a *Sink* and *Deluge* of *Iniquity*: and therefore tho' here *God* many times spares *particular Offenders*, there being a *future State* in which he can reckon with them and call them to a strict account for all their *Affronts* and *Provocations*; yet 'tis very rare, if ever, that he suffers wicked *Nations* to go unpunished here; because if he should, as such they would escape for ever. And how would it *weaken* the *Government* of the *World*, if when *God* sees a *People* confederate against him, blow the *Trumpets of Rebellion* and gather into *Armies* to urge *War* against him, he should sit still with his hands in his bosom and take no notice of it? for tho' among *Men* the *Multitude* of *Offenders* be many times the *Cause* of their *Impunity*, because of the *Weakness* of *Humane Governments* which are glad to spare, where

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they are not strong enough to *punish* ; yet in the Government of God things are quite otherwise : no Combination of Sinners is too hard for *Him*, and the *greater* and more *numerous* the *Offenders* are, the more his *Justice* is concerned to vindicate the Affront. However therefore God may pass by single Sinners in this World, yet when a *Nation* combines against him, *when hand joins in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

3. *Wickedness* tends to the *Ruine* of Kingdoms and Nations as it contributes to the corrupting and infatuating of their *Counsels*. For *Vice* and *Wickedness* doth very much depress the Minds, and weaken the *Understandings* of Men ; it doth so *warp* their Judgments, and cast such mists of *Prejudice* around their Reason, that they are not able to discern the *Issues* and *Consequents* of things ; for when they are overpowered by their *Lusts*, their Affections will *mislead* their Minds, and impose upon them for Truth and Realities their own unreasonable Wishes and Desires : And when we *advise* in the midst of a Company of head-strong *Passions* and *Appetites*, we are like *Rehoboam* amongst his young and *hair-brain'd* Counsellors, who represented things to him not as they were in themselves, but according to *his own* Desires and Inclinations. And when the *Counsels* of a Nation are steered by its own *vicious* Affections,

fections, that will most commonly seem *best* which is most unreasonable, and so *Storms* will many times be mistaken for *Calms*, and *Rocks* for safe and quiet *Harbours*. No Man is fit to counsel for a *publick Good* but he that is led by *simple* and *unbiassed* Reason, because he only will attend *impartially* to the Reasons of things, and *accommodate* his Advices to the publick Necessities and Exigencies of Affairs; but when the Man himself is governed by any unreasonable *Appetite* or *Affection*, that will ever and anon *intermingle* with this Judgment and *bias* his counsels towards its own unreasonable Desires and Inclinations. And when such blind Affections as *Pride* and *Ambition*, *Covetousness* and *Revenge* sit at the stern, and are the Pilots and Steer-men of a Kingdom; how can it be expected but that in the midst of so many *Rocks* and *Quick-sands* that surround it, it should run a ground, or be split in pieces?

4. *Wickedness* tends to the *Ruine* of Kingdoms and Nations as it contributes to *melt* and *emasculate* their *Courage*. For tho' it cannot be denied, but that the *Valour* and *Courage* of Nations is very much owing to the temper of the *Climes* in which they are situate, yet 'tis evident that as *People* of the most effeminate *Climes* have by *Virtue* been improved into *heroick* and *magnanimous*, as the

Romans and *Persians* for instance ; so those of the most *hardy* and *courageous Climes* have many times by their *dissolute Manners* been broken and dispirited into the most wretched *Cowards* and *Poultroons* ; as the *English* for instance, who tho' they have been ever remarked for a *People* of a *daring* and *undaunted Genius*, yet have sometimes been so melted by their own *Softness* and *Luxury*, as that they became Preys to every *Dog* that hunted them. And indeed *Softness*, *Luxury*, and *Wantonness*, are Vices that will effeminate the Spirits and spoil the strain of the most *valorous Nation* ; for as Virtues are increased by Exercise, so they shrink and decay by Inactivity, and there is no State of Life that doth so *fetter* our Courage and *restrain* its Vigour and Activity, as that of *Idleness* and *Luxury* ; in which after it hath stewed and dissolved a while it will convert into the greatest *Baseness* and *Pusillanimity* : for an *intemperate Bowl*, a Bed of *Sloth* and a *Dalilah's Lap* are Charms sufficient to *effeminate a Heroe*, and bewitch a *Lion* into a timorous Hare. And as these *particular Vices* do naturally discourage a Nation, so Vice in general hath the same Effect ; for it naturally impresses a sense of *Guilt* upon the Mind, which fills it with such *Fears* and *Horrors* as cannot but *weaken* and *dispirit* the hardiest and most daring Courage.

rage. For how can a Man be *courageous* that is continually stung with the Remories, and haunted with the restless *Furies* of his own guilty Mind; that carries a *Hell* within his own Bosom, and hath a thousand Guilt, like so many grim and ghastly Devils, continually staring him in the Face? Certainly such an One must either lay by his *Reason* or his *Courage*, and become a *Coward* or cease to be a Man. Hence it is said, *The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a Lyon*, Prov. 28. 1. And when a Nation is thus dispirited by their own *Lusts* and *Guilt*, then are they ripe for *Ruine*, and fit to be made a prey for every *Nimrod* that will hunt and invade them.

5. *Wickedness* tends to the *Ruine* of Kingdoms and Nations, as it breaks and dissolves their *Union*. For as true *Religion* knits mens Hearts together by the indissoluble *Ligaments* of mutual *Love* and *Charity*, as it heals their *Spirits*, and corrects their *Passions*, and inspires their *Natures* with all those obliging *Graces* upon which the *Peace* and *Concord* of Society is founded; so on the contrary, *Vice* and *Wickedness* rends and divides the hearts of men, sows seeds of *Discord* in their *Natures*, frets and inflames their *Spirits* against one another, and impregnates them with such *rude* and *barbarous* *Passions* as do naturally render them *unfavourable* to

each other ; such as are *Pride* and *Ambition*, *Envy* and *Malice*, *Covetousness* and *Revenge*, which naturally tend to the *Dissolution* of *Society*, and the cutting in funder all the cords of *Friendship* and good *Neighbourhood*. Hence is that of *St. James*, Chap. iv. 1. *From hence come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members.* Yea doubtless this is the Cause of all those *Discords* that spoil the Harmony of this *Moral World*, the *Pandora's Box* out of which have swarmed all those *Strifes* and *Contentions*, *Broils*, and *Confusions* that have destroyed and ruined many flourishing Kingdoms. For tho' the most turbulent *Factions* are usually faced with zeal for God, yet if you look beyond the *Outside*, you will always find that most of the *Broils* that have been conducted under the display'd Banners of *Religion* have been raised and led on by the *Devilish Passions* of those who have been the most zealous *Sticklers* for and *Fomenters* of them. Thus *Vice*, you see, doth naturally divide a Nation ; and teares the Members of it in funder ; and our *Saviour* assures us that when a Kingdom is divided against it self, it is soon brought to desolation, *Matthew xii. 25.* For those *Divisions* do mightily impair the strength of a Kingdom, which like an impetuous Stream being parted into several

veral *Currents* runs with far less force, and is much more easily forded. And when once a Nation is torn and separated into *Factions*, it is at best but like a *Confederate Army*, which tho' it be united into one Body hath several *contrary Interests* and *Designs* which divides their counsels and makes them *suspicious* of one another, and so less able to withstand the force of an *united Enemy*; and in these circumstances what can be expected but that either they should fall out among themselves and sheath their swords in one anothers Bowels, or be made an easie prey to the power and rapine of their common *Adversary*?

6. *Wickedness* tends to the Ruine of Kingdoms and Nations, as it disturbs them in their *Order* and regular *Administration*. For as *Religion* lays the Foundations of all good *Order* in a Kingdom, as it obliges the *Governours* to all those regular *Virtues* that make them publick Blessings, to *Justice*, and *Liberality*, to *Truth* and *Mercy*, to *Constancy* and *Magnanimity*; as it blinds the subordinate *Instruments* and *Ministers of State* to *Fidelity* and *Diligence* as it engages the Subjects to honour and reverence, to obey and submit to their *Governours*; so on the contrary, *Vice* and *Wickedness* when it hath insinuated it self into a *Nation*, *subverts* the whole *Order* of it, and miserably confounds the Course of its

its *Administration*: it introduces into the *Government* *Opposition* and *Tyranny*, *Fraud* and *Cruelty*, *Cowardize* and *Inconstancy* ; it perverts the *Ministers* of it into *Traytors* and *Robbers*, and turns its *Courts of Justice* into dens of *Thieves* ; it alienates the *Subjects* from their *Duty* and *Allegiance*, makes them *heady* and *high-minded*, *rude* and *pragmatical*, *factious* and *ungovernable* ; and in a word, spreads such a *poisonous Contagion* over all the vital *Parts* of a *Nation*, as, without a *speedy Cure*, must necessarily end in the *Ruine* and *Desolation* of the whole. For such universal *Disorders* are as the *Symptoms* of *Death* upon a *Nation*, and like those *gentler Convulsions* within the *Bowels* of the *Earth* do portend the *Approach* of some dreadful *Earthquake*. And as when the whole *mass* of *Blood* and *Humors* is corrupted, the *Body* is sick unto *Death*, and will putrefy apace into a *Carcase* ; thus when a *Kingdom* is thus *universally* disordered, when as the *Prophet* expresses it, *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint*, when from the *crown* of the *head* to the *sole* of the *foot* there is no *Soundness* in it, but all is covered with *wounds* and *bruises* and *putrefying sores* ; what can be expected but a *speedy* and a *fatal Period* ?

7. *Wickedness* tends to the *Ruine* of *Kingdoms* and *Nations*, as it consumes their *Wealth* and *Subitance*. Whilst *Virtue* and *Religion*

Religion do bear sway in a Nation; to be sure it is of a *frugal* and *industrious* Genius, the People will attend to their *own* Business and not be *intermeddling* pragmatically in anothers *Diocess*; They will enjoy themselves within the *Bounds* of Modesty and Sobriety, and make a conscience of *out-spending* their *Fortunes*, and living above their proper *Ranks* and *Degrees* in the World. And whilst every *Member* thus acts within its *proper* Sphere, the *Nation* cannot but *thrive* and *prosper*, each one by his honest *Frugality* and *Industry* being enabled upon all occasions to contribute to the Defence and Support of the *Publick*. But when once *Vice* and *Wickedness* have thrust out *Virtue* and overspread the Nation, it introduces in its room so many *costly*, *chargeable*, and *prodigal* Lusts, as will soon *exhaust* its Wealth, and suck the Blood out of its *Veins*. Then in comes *Idleness*, and like a *Drone* lives upon the acquies of *Industry*: Then *Pride* begins to spread her *Peacocks* train, and flaunt out what *Frugality* had saved, in gorgeous Apparel and sumptuous Furniture. Then *Drunkenness* and *Gluttony* begin to call out for *Meat* and *Drink* offerings to their God, *the Belly*; and *Lust* and *Wantonness* to crave Provisions to feed and pamper their insatiate *Appetites*: in a word, then comes in such a Pack of greedy *Hell-hounds* to devour the Fruits of
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our past *Frugality* and *Industry*, as are sufficient to drain and exhaust the *Indies*. And when there are so many *Locusts* swarming in every corner of the *Land*, what can be expected but that at last they should eat up every *green* Thing, and devour the *Fruits* of every *Tree*? For we may maintain whole *Fleets* and *Armies* at a cheaper rate than a few extravagant *Lusts*, and let but *Pride* and *Idleness*, *Intemperance* and *Wantonness* be let loose, and allowed to sponge a while upon a Nation, and in a little time they shall more *impoverish* and *consume* its Substance, than a long and wasting *War*. And when the *Wealth* of a Nation which is the *vital Blood* that runs and circulates about its Veins and Arteries, is thus continually sucked by these insatiate *Daughters of the Horse-leech* that still cry out *Give, Give*; its Life must necessarily ebb by degrees, and at the last it must *faint* away and *expire*.

8. And lastly, *Wickedness* tends to the *Ruine* of Kingdoms and Nations, as it impairs and debases their *Esteem* and *Reputation*. *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, saith the *Wise Man*, but *Sin is the reproach of any people*, Prov. xiv. 34. for *Vice* hath such a natural *Baseness* and *Uncomeliness* in it, that whenever it appears in its own Colours, it creates a mighty *Disesteem* of it self in the Minds of all that behold it, and where-
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ever it goes, it carries an *infamous* Character along with it; it *blasts* the Reputation of its own Votaries, covers their Heads with *Shame* and *Disbonour*, causes them to *rot* above Gound, and to *stink* alive, and when they are *dead*, writes a *black* and *inglorious* Memory on their Graves. When therefore this *foul* and *noisome* Leprosy hath spread it self over the Face of a *Nation*, it must necessarily render it a *horrid* and *monstrous* Spectacle unto all that behold it; and tho' the *Universality* of Sin may give it some Reputation where its *Throne* and *Empire* is seated, and render it *genteel* and *fashionable* among its own *Slaves* and *Vassals*; yet 'tis such a Reputation as hath no bottom to support it. For unless my *Honour* be founded in some *real Excellency*, it is not in *me*, but in the *Conceit* of him that honours me; his *Fancy* is the *Mint* where all my Reputation is coined, and 'tis at his pleasure to stamp me an *Angel* or a *Devil*. So that tho' *Vice* may sometimes be in *Vogue* where it is universally spread and propagated, yet it being a *Vogue* without Foundation, all the *Credit* it gives is only a *fantastick* Being, a thing that is only the *Sport* and *Dalliance* of *vulgar* Breath and *popular* Noise; but whilst its own *blind Votaries* sing *Hosanna's* to it, and strew its way with *Palms*, all the World besides exclaim against and cry unanimously *Cru-*

cify it, *Crucify* it. So that while it is honored at home, it is vilified abroad, and tho' we may be sometimes so *besotted* as to reckon it our *Glory*, yet to be sure all wise and indifferent *Judges* will upbraid it to us as our *Shame*. For what *wicked* Nation is there that hath ever escaped the *Reproaches* and *Infamy* of Mankind, that hath abandoned it self to *Fraud* and *Treachery*, to *Softness* and *Effeminacy*, to *Oppression* and *Cruelty*; and hath not thereupon drawn upon it self the *Scorn* and *Hissing* of all the Nations round about it? And when a *People* are grown *cheap* and *despicable* in their Neighbours eyes, when their *Faith* is suspected, their *Truth* branded, and their *Virtue* stained and blemished, what Support or friendly Inter-courfe can they expect from them? Who will *trust* to their Leagues or Confederacies, or enter into Commerce with them, who have neither *Truth* and *Justice* to secure them? for so much *Reputation* as a *Nation* loses, so much *Strength* it loses; for 'tis a mighty *Strength* to a *People* to be *feared* and *lov'd* by their neighbouring Nations, neither of which they can expect to be when once they have sunk their *Reputation*; for who will *dread* an *effeminate* *People* softened with *Luxury* and *Voluptuousness*? or who will *love* a *profligate* *People* distained with *Cruelty* and *Falshood*? And when a *People* hath nor

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Credit enough to make them either *fear'd* or *lov'd*, if then they are not *ruin'd* and *destroy'd*, it is because their *Enemies* either think it not worth the *while*, or are not at *leisure* to attempt it.

And thus you see, how many ways *Wickedness* contributes to the *Ruine* of a Nation. So that when *Wickedness* hath overspread a People, and is become their *Epidemical* disease, it doth not only bode their approaching fate, but hastens it, and pulls it headlong down upon them; and without a *Miracle* they must reform, or *sink* or *perish*. For unless God alters the natural *Course* of things and hinders necessary *Causes* from producing their *Effects*, it will be as impossible to hinder the *Ruine* of a *Kingdom* that is overwhelmed with *Wickedness*, and obstinately continues so, as it is to save a *House* from burning that is wrapt and compass'd round with *Flames*; because the burning of a *House* is not a more necessary *Effect* of the *Flames* that surround it, than the *Ruine* of a *Nation* is of the *Sins* that overspread it. *One* way therefore there is left, and only one, for such a *Nation* to save it self, and that is by *Repentance*; which brings me to the next Proposition in the Text, That true *Repentance* and *Amendment* is the certain way to prevent that *Ruine* which our *Iniquities* threaten. *Repent and turn*

your selves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruine. But before I enter upon this Proposition, I shall draw a few practical Inferences from what hath been said.

I. From hence I infer what *plagues* and *nuisances* wicked Men are to a *Kingdom*, since the Tendency of *Sin* in so many particulars is so very *destructive* to its Welfare and Interest. These are the grand disturbers of *Israel* the wretched *Incendiaries* that set all in Flames and Combustions about them; their Sins are the *Trains* that do give Fire to those *Mines* of Ruine that sink and tear up *Kingdoms*, and their Breasts are the *Seminaries* and *Harbourers* of those *Traitors* that do conspire against and undermine our *Peace* and *Happiness*. For as for those *Traytors* without, tho' they were a thousand times if possible more *crafty* and *restless* and *malicious* than they are, we might defy their hellish *Plots* and *Intreagues*, and smile at their vain Attempts did not our Sins contribute to make us miserable; but when we by our own *Wickedness* will joyn hands with their restless *Craft* and *Malice*, assist them against our selves and *co-operate* with them to our own destruction, what remedy is there for us? when the sins of our *Friends* are conspiring our ruine together with the malice of our *Enemies*, how can we hope either wholly

wholly to escape, or much longer to defer it? for if ever that destruction come upon us which hath been so long designing and is now hanging over us, this *Epitaph* will very well fit our *Tombs*, *Here lies a miserable Nation, whose Ruine is owing more to their own Sins than to all the Designs and Powers of their Enemies.* Consider this therefore, O you *Sinners* in this our *Sion*; you are, tho you know it not, in a strict confederacy with the *Priests* and *Jesuits* against your native *Cuntry*, against the *Protestant Religion*, and against the *Liberties* and *Properties of English men*; you are accessory to all those *Treasons* which they have contrived, and are still contriving against the *Religion* and *Laws* and *Government* of the *Nation*; and if ever they thrive and take effect (which the *God of Heaven* avert) we may thank you for prospering and succeeding them; who by your *pride* and *sensuality*, your *fraud* and *faction*, your *covetousness* and *oppression* do what in you lyes to ripen and give a prosperous birth to the *treasonous* designs of our common *Adversaries*. And therefore if yet you have any regard either for this sinking *Kingdom* whose *Womb* bore you, or to this bleeding *Church* whose *Paps* gave you suck (both which in the most sorrowful postures that a *Church* and *Kingdom* can be well reduced to, are now crying out unto you, O

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you our cruel and unnatural Children, have pity upon us! have pity upon us!) if, I say, you have any regard either for the one or the other, O be now at last perswaded to commiserate their deplorable Condition, to take off those *loud-mouthed Sins* you have set upon them, and are now like a *pack of Hounds* tearing and worrying them in pieces.

2 From hence I infer what is the true Cause of those many *national* Evils which we feel and justly fear. For since Iniquity doth so directly tend to the *Ruine* of a *Nation*, to what other Cause may we more truly attribute either those present or those future Evils that have, or shall befall us? When any *Calamity* befalls us we are apt to ascribe it all either to *false* or else to *partial* Causes, and if we reckon *Sin* among the Causes, to be sure we skip and overlook our own. 'Tis the *Carelessness* or *ill Design* of this or t'other minister of State crys *one*; 'tis the *peevishness* and *Faction* of such a Gang and Party, crys *another*; 'tis the *Rigour* and *Severity* of those who comply with and contend for the *legal Establishment*, crys a *third*; when these at most are but a *partial* Cause, and the main Spring, God knows, of all our *Mischiefs* lies within our own *bosoms*. And tho' many of us are sensible, as we cannot well be otherwise, that Sin hath a great hand in all our *Sufferings* and *Calamities*, yet alas how few

few are there that reckon their own Sins into the tale: They are the sins of the *Court* crys the *City*, and the sins of the *City* crys the *Country*; they are the sins of the *Church* crys the *Separatist*, and the sins of the *Clergy* crys the *Laity*, and the sins of the *Gentry* crys the *Commonalty*. Thus every one washes his own hands, and like the *Whore* in the *Proverbs*, *wipes his mouth and crys I have done no wickedness*; so that tho' none are guiltless and every one stands accused by his *Antagonist*, yet if all may be believed, none are guilty: and so the *Judgments* of *God* are posted from *Tithing* to *Tithing* from one Party of Men to another, and nobody will own them tho' they call us all *Father*; which is just as if a *company* of *People* in a dreadful *Conflagration* should fall a contending with one another at whose House the fire began, and in the mean time permit it quietly to burn on till it had consumed all before it. Whereas if we would put a stop to the *Judgments* that begin to *flame* about our ears we should every one reflect upon our selves, and bring our *Buckets* of *penitential* Tears to extinguish that part of them which our own sins have kindled; and if we would but do thus, if every Man would smite upon his own *Thigh* and cry, *Lord what have I done?* then we might hope to see that growing Flame put out and

quenched that now waves its *curled* Head^r and threatens *universal* Ruine: but till once we are brought to a sorrowful sense of our own *Sins*, and of the share they contribute to the *publick* Mischiefs, we are not so much as in the way of Recovery. For since the Cause of the Kingdoms Sickness lies, *God* knows, in all our Breasts, how is it possible we should conspire to remove the whole till we are every man sensible of his own part? Let us therefore search and examine our own hearts what we have contributed to the *publick* *Disease*, and every one purge out his own particular share of it; and then to be sure all will soon be well again, and this poor *Kingdom* that hath so many years been languishing under the Sins of its *Natives*, and is now reduced almost to its last *gasps*, will yet recover, and once more flourish in perfect *health* and *vigour*.

3. From hence I infer what is the just *Character* of those Men who by their *Principles* and *Practices* contribute to the Ruine of *Kingdoms*. For since Iniquity so directly tends to a publick *Ruine*, we may be sure that those *Principles* and *Practices* that naturally tend to the same end are *Principles* and *Practices* of Iniquity; and yet good *God*! how many such are there that under the fair disguises of *Christian* Doctrines and godly *Zeal*, and with their demure Looks and religious

religious Countenances do many times seduce and *cajole* weak and well-disposed Minds into such seditious *Gangs*, mutinous Practices and treasonous Conspiracies as do too often end either in their own Ruine, or their native *Countries*. Thus in the *Church of Rome*, what horrid and barbarous Practices have there been occasioned by those *Antichristian* Doctrines of the lawfulness of destroying *Hereticks*, deposing and murdering of Kings; How many *Kings* and *Emperors* have there been excommunicated, butchered and destroyed by them? How many flourishing *Kingdoms* have there been depopulated, wasted and imbrewed in blood by them? How many *millions* of *Men, Women* and *Children* have there been sacrificed to the demands of those inhumane and blood-thirsty Principles? Insomuch that it may be justly questioned, whether for 600 Years together, these Pretences of *Christianity* did not destroy more Lives then *Christians* it self hath sav'd *Souls*. And would to God that these destroying Principles had been for ever confined within the Pale of that degenerate *Church*! Then might our *Reformation* have boldly challenged to it self the Spirit of *Peace* and *Meekness*, of unbounded *Charity*, unstained *Loyalty* and firm *Allegiance*, and without a blush in its face have upbraided that *Mother of Harlots* with be-

ing the only *Patronefs* of *Treasons*, and *Rebellions*, and *Confusion*. But alas, those that have turned the World upside down are come hither also, and have sown their mischievous Principles in our fruitful fields, where they have sprung up many an ill Weed; and these, God knows, have grown apace. For not to touch upon the old Sores, which for our own Credit sake and our *Religions*, O would to God were lost in perpetual Oblivion; how many are there this day among us that out of a pretence of Zeal for God and Religion, make it their business to divide and tear, rend and distract the *Kingdom*? who by starting Jealousies and ill surmises, fetching and carrying Tales and scandalous Reports against the *Government*, suggesting miscarriages of State that never were, and blackning and aggravating those that are, do what in them lyes to blow up the Discontents of the Kingdom into an intestine Flame, and, whilst the common *Enemy* is boring a Hole in the bottom of the *Ship*, do set the *Mariners* together by the ears, that so while they are scuffling within they may neglect the danger from without, till one common Ruine involves them all, and Sinks them together with their Swords in one anothers bowels. And tho' it is notorious to all the World what a mighty *Bulwark* this *Church*

hath

hath always been to the *Reformed Religion*, how much it hath been the Dread and Envy of *Rome*, and the mark of her Power and Malice; how all her *Agents* have constantly conspired to fight neither against small nor great, but against the *Church of England*, in hope that if once this *Master-fort* were dismantled, they should quickly force the lesser *Garisons* and *Citadels* to surrender; yet how, many Parties have we among our selves who yet pretend great Zeal to the *Reformation*, that industriously set themselves to batter down its Sanctuary, about its ears, that joyn their Throats in one common Cry with the *Priests* and *Jesuits*, *Down with her, down with her even to the ground*; and all this to gratify their prejudice against a few innocent and indifferent *Rites*, which as private *Communicants* they are very little, if at all, concerned in. I do not charge these Men with a *Popish* Design, tho' I am sure they charge us with it upon far less Reason; but this I say and will maintain it, that whilst they thus industriously set themselves to tear open the wounds of our *Church*, and widen them into incurable *Schisms*, they take a most effectual course to open a gap for *Popery* which stands at the door and only waits till the Breach is wide enough for it to enter

To conclude all therefore, seeing it is the Sin and Wickedness of *People* and *Nations* that is the main Spring of their Ruine and Destruction, let us, as we would escape that dismal Ruine, which for several years hath hung over our *Heads*, and hath been pouring it self upon the Heads of several neighbouring *Countrys*, and *Nations*, betake our selves to a deep *Humiliation* for, and hearty *Repentance* of our *Sins*, which threaten us more then all the Powers of our most powerful *Enemies*. We are now ingaged in a *War* against a great *Prince*, who hath not only by a most salvage and barbarous *Persecution* of his own *Subjects* proclaimed himself a mortal *Enemy* to our *Religion*, but also by his perfidious Violations of the Law of *Nations*, his infractions of the most sacred Ties and Obligations, and his unparallel'd Cruelties towards all that have fall'n within the Reach of his Power, hath render'd himself the common *Enemy* of *mankind*, and seems to have been raised up on purpose by *God* to be the Plague and Scourge of a wicked *World*; his Power having for several years hung over all *Christendom* like a dismal *Cloud* charged with *Thunder* and *Lightning*, and having discharged it self upon several *Countries* and *Nations* in such prodigious Showers of *Blood*, and Tempests of Ruine and Devastation, as scarce any *History*

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can paralel: against this mischievous *Power* that glories in nothing but *Outrage*, and triumphs upon the *Ruines* of *mankind*, we are now engaged in conjunction with almost all the *Christian World* in a common Defence, there being no remedy left us but either to repel and vanquish it or to lie at its feet, and tamely submit our selves to be trampled into Destruction by it: nor is there any *Nation* under the *Cope of Heaven* that hath greater advantages of curbing it in its *Career* than our own, if our own *Sins* and *intestine* Divisions do not spoil all. Wherefore as we hope to succeed in this our necessary Defence of our *Religion* and our native *Country*, let us every one in our places endeavour by laying aside all our *Malice* and *Revenge*, our *Pride* and *Faction*, to cement those unhappy Breaches that are among our selves, and all betake our selves to a serious and hearty *Repentance* for our own *Sins*, that thereby we may reconcile our selves to *God* and engage his *Almighty Power* to fight for us.

And thus I have done with the first Proposition contain'd in these Words, [*Repent and turn your selves from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity shall not be your ruine*] That the Iniquity of any *People* or *Nation* tends directly to their *Ruine*. And shall now proceed to the second; viz.

That

That true *Repentance* and *Amendment* is the most effectual way to prevent that *Ruine* which our Iniquities do so naturally bring upon us.

This it is upon a *twofold* Influence it hath,

1. Upon God.

2. Upon our Selves.

1. It hath a powerful Influence upon God, who is the *Sovereign Arbitrator* of the Fate of *Nations*, and doth dispose of their *Ruine* and *Happiness* as he pleases. For he being the *sovereign Lord* of the World, and *supream Moderator* of all Issues and Events, there is no particular *Kingdom* or *Nation* that is exempt from his *Jurisdiction* and *Disposal*, and 'tis in his Power alone to determine of every one of them whether they shall be happy or miserable. *It is the Lord that killeth and that maketh alive; that bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up; the Lord that maketh poor and maketh rich, that bringeth low and lifteth up,* 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7. And as he thus disposes of the Fate of particular *Persons*, so he doth much more of the Fate of particular *Nations*: for 'tis he that *encreaseth the Nations*, and *destroyeth them*; he that *enlargeth the Nations*, and *streightneth them*, Job xii. 23. And Dan. iv. 17. it is said, that the most High ruleth in the *Kingdom of men*,

and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And in 2 Kings xix. 15. Hezekiah thus addressees to him, *Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the Kingdoms of the earth.* And if the Government and Disposal of *Nations* be in Gods hand as you see it is, then whatsoever hath an influence upon God, to oblige and in dear him to a *Nation*, must needs effectually conduce to its *Recovery* and *Welfare*; because it makes Him its Friend, who alone can make it *happy* and *miserable*: and that which in dears God to us, who alone hath Power to rescue and recover us, must needs effectually conduce to our *Recovery*. Now that *Repentance* hath such an *Influence* upon God, will evidently appear whether we consider it,

1. As an Act of natural *Justice* and *Rectitude*; or,
2. As the *primary* End and Design of *Punishment*; or,
3. As the best *Reparation* we can make him for our *Rebellions* against him; or,
4. As the *Condition* upon which he hath voluntarily obliged himself to be reconciled unto us.

1. Consider it as an Act of natural *Justice* and *Rectitude*; and as such it must needs have a powerful *Influence* upon God: for
Justice

Justice or *Rectitude* of Choice and Action are everlastingly founded in the *Nature* of God, to whom it is as natural to govern himself and all his Actions by the *best* and *purest Reason*, as it is to exist or live. So that whatsoever hath natural *Rectitude* in it, and is squared and regulated by right *Reason*, must needs be *harmonious* to the *Nature* of God, and consequently doth as naturally please and gratify Him as a musical Note doth a musical Ear: for every *Nature* hath a delightful *Gust* and *Relish* of that which is agreeable to it self; and therefore since it is natural to God himself to act according to the *eternal Reasons* of things, to see others act so too, must needs be *grateful* to his *Nature*; but to *repent* is the most *reasonable* Action that sinful Creatures can perform. For if it be best and most reasonable *not* to do *amiss* at all, then doubtless when we *have* done *amiss*, the next most reasonable is to resolve to do so *no more*, there being the *same* Reason why he that hath sinned should sin *no more*, as why he that hath not, should not sin at all. And therefore I cannot but wonder at the wild *Affertion* of some of our *Philosophical Sinners*, that to *repent* is an Argument of *meanness* of *Spirit*; and discovers in us a weak and *irresolute Mind*; as if, because I have plaid the *fool*, I must resolve to be a *Fool* for ever, for fear of being

being accounted *weak* and *irresolute*; as if to *change* a *mean* and *base Resolution* were a piece of Meanness and Baseness. Indeed to *enter* into *base Resolutions* argues a *base* or *inconsiderate Spirit*, but to *revoke* them is so far from being *base* or *mean*, that it is highly *rational* and *generous*; there being the *same Reason* for the *revoking* a bad Resolution as there is against the *making* it; and next to *not yielding* to an unreasonable motion, the highest Bravery in a reasonable Nature is *not to persist* in it. For if we are *reasonable Beings*, our Strength and Bravery must consist in being *constant* to our *Reason*; but to be constant *against* it, is to be constant *Fools*, or constant *Knaves*, or both; and if this be the *Character* of a bravely *resolute Mind*, much good may it do those *heroick Sinners* that count it a *Reproach to repent*. For the main of *Repentance* consists in the changing of unreasonable for wise and reasonable *Resolutions*, than which no *Change* can be more agreeable to the *eternal Laws of Reason*; and these Laws being founded in the *Nature of God*, this *Change* must be infinitely agreeable to him, and have a most powerful Influence upon him. For since to *repent* is the most reasonable Action that a *Sinner* can do, by what can sinful *Creatures* more effectually indear our selves to God;

God ; who being most reasonable himself, must needs be most affected with that which is most reasonable in us.

2. Consider *Repentance* as the primary End and Design of *Punishment*, and as such it must needs have a powerful *Influence* upon God. For there being no such thing as a *blind unreasonable Vengeance* in the *Nature* of God he cannot be supposed to punish for *Punishment* sake, since *that* would be to inflict Misery on others merely to sport and recreate his own *Revenge*, that being the only Passion in Nature which a pure Mischief can *gratify* or *please*. Since therefore there is no *such* Affection in the *Nature* of God, we may be sure he doth not punish to *please* Himself, but to *reform* and *amend* his criminal Creatures, and that it is for the *Good* that Punishment doth *us*, and not for any Good that it doth *Him* that he chooseth and inflicts it upon us: for he needs not our Misery to make him happy, being most compleatly happy, already in the *immense* Perfection of his own *Nature* ; and it is nothing but the Want of *Happiness* in it self that makes any *Being* desire or design *another's* Misery. Since therefore God cannot be suppos'd to design our *Punishment* under the Notion of a pure Misery, it hence necessarily follows that if he designs any thing ; as to be sure he doth, it must be to do

do

do us or others *Good* by it, and consequently that since it is for the sake of this *Good* that he inflicts it, he will most readily dispence with it, if *that* be but answered and obtained without it. But now our *Repentance* both in a great measure answer and supply the End of our *Punishment*, which is either to *reform* us when we have done amiss, or to *warn* others by our Example not to tread in our Footsteps; both which Ends are in an high degree obtained in our unfeigned *Repentance*. For if we heartily *repent* of our past Iniquities, we shall be sure to *amend* them for the future; and it is impossible *that* Repentance should be true, which doth not upon the first Opportunity commence into an actual *Reformation*: and so if it be true also, it will render us exemplary *Warnings* unto others; for it will inflict upon us such bitter *Sorrows*, such deep *Remorses* and stinging *Reflections* as will render us almost as great and eminent *Examples* of the Evil and Folly of our Sins, as the *Punishments* that were intended against them: and those of our *Brethren* in Iniquity that will take no warning by us, when they see the *Throbs* and *Agonies* of our *Repentance*, how it Pierces, Wounds, and Mortifies our Souls; in all probability would be as *little* affected should they instead of that see the hand of God upon us *chastizing* and *correcting* us
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for our Follies. For he that heartily *repents*, makes almost as woful an *Experiment* of the Folly and Evil of his *Sin*, as he that hath felt the Punishment of it; and next to a bleeding punished *Criminal*, there is no such *Example* of the Madneſs of Sin as a weeping, merciful, and dejected *Penitent*. Since therefore in both theſe reſpects *Repentance* doth ſo effectually ſupply the deſigns of our *Punishment*, we may be ſure the *merciful* God who doth always Punish in order to thoſe Deſigns, will be very much influenced by it. For every *Agent* is ſatiſfied, when it hath its End, and therefore ſince our *Repentance* will ſupply thoſe Ends which God deſigns in our *Punishment*, we may be ſure it will highly pleaſe and gratify him; for in our *Repentance* he hath what he aimed at, when he deſigned to *puniſh* us, and to be ſure good God will never be ſo fond of the *Miſeries* of his *Creatures* as to puniſh them to no purpoſe.

3. Conſider *Repentance* as the beſt *Reparation* we can make for our paſt Sins and Rebellions, and as ſuch alſo it muſt needs have a mighty *Influence* upon God. 'Tis true for Sinners to make a *full* *Reparation* to God for the Affronts and Diſhonors they have caſt upon him, is *impoſſible*; becauſe what they have *done* they can no more *undo*, than make what is *paſt* never to have *been*.

But

but yet he that *heartily repents* of his former Sins, for as much as he hates and laments them, and wishes from his Soul that he had never done them, doth hereby morally *cancel* and *revoke* them; for this universal Act of *Nolition* extending to all his past bad Choices, tho' it cannot so undo as to cause them not to have been, yet it doth so *unwill* and *unchoose* them, as if they were not, they should never be. 'Tis true, God being our *supream* Lord and Lawgiver, the only *compleat* Satisfaction we can personally render him is *perfect* unfinning *obedience* to his Laws, of which when we have once fail'd there is no after-Act of our own can make him a perfect *Reparation*, because if our after-Act be an Act of *Obedience* (as all good and virtuous ones are) God hath the *same* Right to it, as he had to that wherein we failed, and 'tis impossible that by satisfying *one* Debt we should make a full Repayment of *another*. But of all our after-*Reparations* there is none approaches so near to *Innocence* and unfinning *Obedience*, as this of unfeigned *Repentance*; for all the difference between an *innocent Person* and a true *Penitent* is only this, that the former never *chose* to Sin, and the latter hath *unchofen* all his Sinful Choices; the one *did* not Sin when it was in his power to do it, the other would not have sinned, if it were in his power not to do it. So that tho' Re-

penitance is by no means equivalent to *Innocence*, yet because of all the after-Acts of a *nocent* Person it makes the nearest approach to it, it necessarily follows that it is the best and highest *Reparation* that any *sinful Creature* can make to an *offended* God. What better *Reparation* can I make for the *Delights* and *Pleasure* I have taken in *offending* him than to submit my self to the *Pains* and *Anguish* of a bitter and severe *Repentance* for it? How can I more effectually repair the many *Dishonours* I have done him by my *base* and *impious* Actions, the *shameless* Affronts I have put upon him, then by laying my stubborn *Will* at his feet, putting on *Shame* and *Confusion* of Face, and *abhorring* my self in *Dust* and *Ashes* before him. This being therefore the *best* Satisfaction that such a *sinful* People as we are can make to our *offended* but most *merciful* God, we may justly hope, that if we tender him *this*, it will have an auspicious Influence upon him to *incline* him towards us and *avert* his just Displeasure from us. When he shall see us prostrate at his Feet, acknowledging with *sorrowful* Hearts the *infinite* Injuries we have done him, offering him all the *poor* Amends we can make him, and *grieving* that we can offer him no more, such a *moving* Spectacle cannot but *kindle* in him a *Relenting* towards us, and cause his *propitious* Bowels to resound with

4. And

4. And lastly, consider *Repentance* as the *Condition* upon which God hath voluntarily engaged himself to be reconciled unto us, and as such also it must needs have a powerful Influence upon him. So in the Text you see he hath obliged himself, upon the Repentance of wicked People, to interpose between their Sin and Ruine, *So iniquity shall not be your ruine.* So also Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10, 11. you have an excellent Account of Gods Readiness to relieve a repenting People, *In their Adversity if they be bound in fetters and holden in cords of affliction, then he sheweth them their work and their transgression wherein they have exceeded. He openeth also their ears to discipline and commandeth that they return from their iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure.* But this perhaps you will say is only a Relation of what God usually doth, and not a Promise by which he obliges himself always to do so well, but it supposes such a Promise on Gods part; else there could have been no sure Foundation for *Elihu* to have promised it. But then Isa. i. 16, 17, 18. you have Gods own word for it, *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord, tho' your sins be as Scarlet, they shall be*

white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the Land. So also Hosea. XIV. 1, 2. 4. O Israel return unto the Lord thy God for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord, say unto him take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render thee the calves of our lips. To which in the 4th Verse God returns this answer of mercy, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as a lilly and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. But these Promises perhaps you will say, respect Israel only, and consequently ought not to be extended unto other Nations; well then let us see in the last place what he hath said to Nations in general Jerem. xviii. 7, 8, At what time I shall speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that Nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. So that what he had promised before to Israel his People here extends to all Nations, viz. that upon their Repentance he will be favourable to them, and repent of the Evil he intended against them; which gives us as great a Certainty of the good Influence of our Repentance upon him

as we can have of his eternal *Truth* which is the Foundation of all Certainty. So that if to have God for our *Friend* can contribute any thing to the *saving* us from an impending *Ruine*, then must our *Repentance* which makes him our *Friend* be so far the Means of our *Salvation*.

2. As *Repentance* hath a great Influence upon *God* to move and incline him to *rescue* us from *Ruine*, so it hath also a mighty Influence upon *us* towards the *preventing* and *obviating* our *Ruine*; so that tho' there were no such thing as a *God* for it to work upon and engage in our Defence and Protection, or tho' that *God* should wholly withdraw himself from Action, and absolutely refuse to intermeddle in our Affairs; yet would our *Repentance* it self by its own *natural* and *necessary* influence most effectually operate towards the *prevention* of that Publick *Ruine*; and that these four ways:

1. As it will thoroughly *awaken* us into a due sense of our *Danger*.

2. As it will *animate* and *encourage* us with the Hope of *Success* upon the Use of due and proper Means.

4. As it will take us *off* from those *mischievous Actions* which do so necessarily contribute to our *Ruine*.

4. As it will put us upon such a *regular Course of Action* as doth naturally tend

to the *publick Good* In all which respects, as I shall shew you, it would be an *effectual Means* of our Recovery.

1. True *Repentance* naturally awakens us, into a due and serious Sense of our *Danger*. For a *vicious Life* doth naturally lull men into a *Sottish* and *Senseless* Security; it makes them *stupid* and *reckless*, and bereaves them of their *natural* Foresight and Sagacity; for besides that it takes off their Minds from the exercise of Reason, and infatuates them with *weak* and *phantastick* Prejudices, it renders them so soft and indulgent to their own *luxurious* and *effeminate* Genius, that they cannot indure any *sad* or *serious* thoughts should intermingle with their *Jovial* *Airs*. So that if Danger stands at any *distance* from them, they wilfully wink at it, and are afraid to look it in the face, lest it should suggest such thoughts to them as would disturb the Scenes of their *Mirth*, and dash their Draughts of *sinful Pleasures* with *Wormwood*. Hence *Amos* vi. 1. 3. it is made the character of the wicked *Israelites* that lived at ease in *Zion*, that they put far from them the evil day, that is, they would not entertain a thought of the *Nearness* of their Danger, lest it should prove a *Thorn* in their Pillows, and disturb their soft and beloved ease. So also *Hosea* xi. 9. *Strangers have devoured his strength,* (saith
he

he speaking of that wicked People) and he knoweth it not, yea gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he perceiveth it not; that is, tho' they were exceedingly wasted already and had all the *Symptoms* of an approaching Ruine upon them, yet they were so intent upon their Lusts, and so besotted by them, that they took no notice of it. And if Men will be so stupid as to neglect their Danger, and never think of retreating till they have run themselves into the Jaws of it, what Remedy is there for them? how can they escape that will sleep on securely upon the Brinks of a Precipice, and will not regard their danger till they are dropping headlong into it, and are fallen beyond Prevention or Recovery? But when once Men betake themselves to a course of serious Repentance, they will soon recover out of this their Lethargick temper. For Repentance will not only chase away all those offensive Lusts which barr'd their Understanding against all Apprehensions of Danger, and rendered them so supine and regardless, but it will make them deeply sensible of the Desert of their Sin, and what fearful Effects are to be expected from it; so that now they will be so far from thrusting from them the Thoughts of their Danger, that they will reckon it among the numberless Miracles of Gods Goodness that they are not

long ago *swallowed up and consumed* by it : and besides those *visible* Dangers that attend them in the *common* Course of Things, they will discern a *black* Cloud arising out of their own *Guilt*, and gathering into storms of *Vengeance*, and look upon their *past* Wickedness as the *dire Omens* of an *approaching* Judgment ; and being thus awaken'd into a *Sense* of the Danger that threatens them, they are so far on their way towards an happy *Recovery*.

2. True *Repentance* will also animate and encourage a People with the Hope of *Success* upon the use of *due* and *proper* Means. It is the *natural* Property of a *wicked* Life to render Men *secure* when Danger is at a *distance*, and *desperate* when it is *near* at hand ; when it is *remote* they are afraid to mind it lest it should *interrupt* their Pleasures, and mingle *Discords* with their *Harmony* ; but when by reason of their *Fear* they are *forced* to mind it, the sudden *unexpected* Alarm it gives them raises such an *Uproar* in their Thoughts that they can neither *find* nor *force* an Escape from it. For the *opposite* Affections of Humane Nature succeed one another in the *same* Degree. Thus when we *hate* those whom we *lov'd* we usually *hate* them in the *same* degree that we *lov'd* them ; and when two *contrary* Passions follow one another, they are generally

nerally both *extream*, and by how much the *foregoer* exceeded the just *medium* of one way, by so much will the *follower* exceed the other: just like the *vibrations* of a *Pendulum*, the which the farther you swing it this way, the farther it will return the *other*; and consequently the more we exceed in *Security*, whilst *Danger* is pursuing us, the more we shall exceed in *Fear* when it hath overtaken us. So that when out of an *extravagant* Indulgence to their *sinful* Pleasures Men shut their Eyes against *approaching* Danger, and will not open them till it is just *upon* them and stares them in the Face, the *gastly* and *surprizing* Spectacle will presently transport them out of *one* Extream into *another*, out of a deep *Security* into a dead *Despair*; especially considering how naturally the Sense of *Danger* awakens in *guilty* Minds their natural Dread of *God*, and fills them with fearful Expectations from *Him*: and when a Man awakes upon the brinks of a *Precipice* and all on a suddain sees an *apparent* Destruction before him, and by this Sight is at the same time roused into a *dismal* Apprehension of an *Almighty Vengeance* behind him stretching forth its arm to thrust him head-long down, how must it needs *appale* and *astonish* him, and *disarm* him of all Hope and Power of escaping. So that out of a *secure Impenitence*,
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you see, there is but one remove into an *heartless* Desperation: and when Men are *desperate* in the midst of danger, and are reduced to their wits end; when they have neither *Prudence* to forecast, nor *Courage* to execute any method of Recovery, without a *Miracle* their *Ruine* is unavoidable. Of this you have an eminent Example in the wicked *Israelites*, who when their Danger was *afar off* were most unreasonably *secure* and *regardless* of it, but when *Senacherib's* Army had *invested* their City, and they saw themselves *surrounded* with Ruine on every side, then their *Security* immediately converts into the most *frightful* and *horrid* Apprehensions; for so the Prophet describes it *Isaiah xxxiii. 14.* *The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites: who amongst us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Whilst the Power of that haughty Monarch was at a *distance* from them, they *laughed at* and *despised* it; but now it is at their *doors* they are so *frightned* at it, that they had no softer Words to express it by than *devouring fire* and *everlasting burnings*: So that if God had not rescued them by a *Miracle*, their unmanly *fears* had so disarmed them, that they would have never been able to defend themselves. But now by our *Repentance* we do most certainly prevent be-

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ing reduced to this *woeful* Extremity; for that will open our Eyes to all approaching *Dangers*, and remove those effeminate *Lusts* out of our way which interrupted our *Prospect* of them; so that we shall see them afar off, and having a free *Sight* and *Expectance* of them, shall not be surpriz'd by them when they draw *nearer*, and are ready to fasten upon us; by which means we shall have *Time* to arm and fortify our selves against them, and to prepare to receive them with *Courage* and *Conduct*. And when they are come, our *Repentance* will also animate us with the Hopes of a timely *Relief* and *Succour* from above, and encourage us to hold out to the last extremity in *Expectance* of God's appearing in the *Mount*, and a timely *Interposure* between us and Ruine. For this being the *Condition* upon which God hath promised us his *Favour* and *Friendship*, there is no Reason why we should be *desperate*, so long as we live in the *Performance* of it. So that the Sense of our unfeigned *Repentance* will inspire us with *joyful* Hope that God is for us; and what Danger can *dishearten* us under this glorious Hope that *infinite* Wisdom and Power is on our side?

3. True *Repentance* doth also abolish those *mischievous Actions* which do naturally contribute to the Ruine of a People. How much a *wicked* Course of Life tends to a Nations
Ruine,

Ruine, is notorious enough to any Man that hath been an Observer of the Effects and Consequences of humane Actions; how it infatuates their Counsels, weakens their Courage, rends their Unity and Concord; how it disorders them in all their natural Respects and Dependencies, consumes their Wealth, and prostitutes their Reputation; and how by all these mischievous Effects it gradually wastes and consumes them, and lays the Foundation of their inevitable Ruine. So that whilst Vice and Wickedness prevail in a Nation, 'tis like a lingering Consumption in our Bodies that soothes us into an Opinion that we are well and in Health, or flatters us with fair Hopes of Recovery; but in the mean time is undermining the Fort of our Life, and preying upon our Vitals. But it is the most wretched piece of Deceit in the World for a Nation to think it self well while it is wicked; for so many Vices as it hath growing in it, so many Diseases it hath ingendering in its Bowels, which tho' it may struggle with a while by the natural Strength and Vigour of its Constitution, will by degrees inevitably weaken it, and without a speedy and effectual Purgation finally consume and destroy it; and if it were the best constituted Nation in the World, it would be impossible for it not to decay and languish under the malignant Influence of an Epidemical Wickedness. That there-
fore

fore which purges away this *corrupt* Humor out of which all *National* Diseases spring, must needs be the most *effectual* Means of a *dying Nations* Recovery, and that, and that only, is *Repentance*, one *essential* Part whereof consists in putting off the Body of *Sin*, ceasing to do *Evil* and denying all *Un-godliness* and *Worldly Lusts*. And if once this bad *Cause* were removed, all the mischievous *Effects* of it would immediately cease, and thereupon the *sick* and *declining* Kingdom that groans and languishes under them would immediately *mend*, and in a little time *recover* its native Health and Vigour. For what should hinder it from growing *well*, when the malignant *Cause* of all its Distempers is removed? when that which *befools* its *Counsels*, *dissolves* its *Courage*, *disorders* its *Harmony*, *breaks* its *Unity*, *lavishes* out its *Wealth* and *Reputation* is utterly abolish'd; what should hinder it from growing up again into a *wise* and a *valiant*, an *orderly* and *unanimous*, a *wealthy* and *renowned* Nation?

4. And lastly, true *Repentance* doth also put us upon such a *Course* of Action as doth naturally tend to the *Publick Good*. For *Repentance* doth not only consist in *ceasing* to do *Evil*, but in *learning* to do *Well*, in putting on the *new Man* as well as putting off the *old*, that is, it is an *intire Submission* of

of our souls to God, to *do* what he *com-*
mands, as well as to *forbear* what he *forbids*,
and the *matter* of his *Commands* is such as
all of it tends to the *publick Good*: and if
the several *Ranks* and *Orders* of Men where-
of a *Nation* is composed would but *unani-*
mously conspire in that *Course* of *Action*
which God hath enjoyned, it would doubt-
less more contribute to the *Weal* and *Prospe-*
riety of such a *Nation*, than the *wisest Coun-*
sels or most *puissant* *Forces* without it. If
those that sit at the *Helm* would but once
resolve to steer by those excellent *Rules* of
honest *Prudence*, impartial *Justice*, discreet
Mercy, wise *Liberality*, advised *Constancy* and
Magnanimity, it would doubtless render
their *Government* far more *safe* and *easy*,
more *useful*, and *prosperous*, than all the
crafty *Tricks*, dark *Intreagues*, and wiley
Subtillties of wicked *Policy*, which instead
of *promoting* the *Government* do generally
lead it into a perplexed *Maze*, and leave it
there miserably *beclouded* and *intangled*.
Again, if those that are *Subjects* would but
learn to govern themselves by those *Laws*
of *Caution* and *Shallowness*, of *Meekness* and *Fideli-*
ty, of *Obedience* and *Loyalty*, which God
hath enjoyned them, with what *Peace* and
Quiet, *Safety* and *Contentment* might they
enjoy themselves under the *Shadow* of *Go-*
vernment. In a word, if the *Rich* would be

but

but as *courteous* and *charitable*, the *Poor* as *thankful* and *industrious*, and all as *just* and *honest*, as *kind* and *gentle*, as ready to *assist*, *forbear* and *forgive* one another as God requires, what a most *glorious* and *happy* Society would there spring out of such a *regular* Course of Action? doubtless for *Peace* and *Contentment*, for *Bliss* and *Happiness*, next to *Heaven* it self, there is no Place comparable to a *virtuous Nation*, and were I in quest of a *terrestrial Paradise*, I should sooner expect it in a barren *Wilderness* inhabited with a *virtuous People*, than in the most fruitful and delicious *Canaan* peopled with *wicked* and *degenerous* Natives. Since therefore a *virtuous* Course of Action hath so *direct* a Tendency to the *publick Good*, it hence necessarily follows that *Repentance*, which is the Entrance and Introduction to it, must needs very much contribute to the *Safety* and *Recovery* of a *Nation*; because it puts the several parts of it into *such* a Course of Life and Conversation as mutually conduces to the *Peace* and *Happiness* and *Preservation* of the Whole: so that whether we consider the powerful *Influence* it hath upon God, or the good *Effect* it hath upon *us*, you see 'tis a most *efficacious* Instrument of *publick Happiness* and *Salvation*. Wherefore if the Consideration of our own *private* Interest, and everlasting fate in *another* World be not sufficient

ficient to move us to a serious *Repentance*, let us add to this the Consideration of our *temporal* Concerns, which are all involved in the fate of the *Nation*. For the *publick* Good is a common *Bank* in which every *member* hath a share, and consequently whatsoever Damage *that* suffers, we must expect to bear *our* Part of it. And yet, God help us! if we impartially view the Designs and Behaviour of the *Generality*, we would hardly think that they did seriously believe there were any such thing as a *Common Weal* among us, every one almost endeavouring to advance his *own* Interest though it be upon the *publick* Ruine, and all our Pretences to the *Publick* being little else but a contracting of *Parties* running a Tilt at one another, whilst the *Common Good* lyes between them, and is equally trampled on by *both* sides. Wherefore as we would not betray our *Common Interest*, and bury our selves in the *publick* Ruine, let us be perswaded to consider our ways before it be too late, and turn to the *Lord* by a deep and hearty *Repentance*. And to move you hereunto I shall desire you to consider these few things

1. What imminent Danger we are in.
2. How much we have *all* contributed to it.
3. How possible it is to *prevent* it by our timely *Repentance*.

4. How

4. How much our *personal Repentance* will avail us tho' we should not *prevent* it.

5. How dearly we wall *repent* when it is too late, if we do not endeavour the prevention of it by *repenting now*.

1. Consider the imminent *Danger* we are in. For if we consider our *present* Circumstances, how many *visible* Causes there are conspiring to effect our *Ruine*, how we lye open to the *common* Adversary that doth so vigorously pursue our Destruction, and like an unwall'd *Vineyard* are surrounded with *wild Boars* without, and over-run with *little Foxes* within, which, tho' they are of different Kinds, agree in the same Ends, and concur to waste and to destroy? how whilst these *little Foxes* are pulling down the *Vine* above, the *wild boars* are waiting underneath to seize and to devour both; how the restless and indefatigable Malice of our *Romish* Adversaries without is assisted with the furious Zeal of our hair-brain'd *Factions* within, who tho' they cannot be insensible how much their Divisions *weaken* and *expose* us, yet seem resolved rather to venture all than not to be *uppermost*; how our Counsels *puzzl'd* and *entangled*, and our Procedures *clogg'd* and *incumbered*; how our Choices are *poiz'd* and *suspended* between *contrary* Evils that seem so *equally* great, that we can hardly determine which is the *least*; in a word,

word, how our Mischiefs are *chain'd* and *link'd* to one another, so that we cannot remove *one* without drawing on *another* in the room of it, and the suspicion of *future* makes us afraid to provide against *present* mischiefs: if, I say, we consider all these things, we cannot but be sensible how *great* and *near* our Danger is, and how earnestly it calls upon us for a *speedy* and *effectual* Remedy. And when we are *encompass'd* with so many Dangers on every side, is it not prodigious *Sottishness* for us to stand gazing on them with our Hands in our Bosoms, making Speeches about them, and telling frightful Stories of them to one another, whilst like a spreading *Gangreen* they are growing upon us, and creeping insensibly to our *Hearts*, whilst the proper Remedy of them is in our *own* hands, and by a *timely* Application we may quickly *cure* and *prevent* them? When we see our selves upon the *Borders* of Ruine, is it a time to stand chattering at the *Wind*, spending our Breath in *fruitless* Complaints, *impotent* Invectives, and *factionous* Murmurings? When it, instead of finding fault with our *Superiors*, arraigning the *Government*, and quarrelling at the *publick* Management and Conduct, we would at least resolve to find Fault with *our selves*, arraign our *own Vices* at the Bar of an *impartial* Conscience, and make a through *Inquisition* into the ill
Conduct

Conduct of *our own* Lives and Manners, we might *cure* the Evils and *prevent* the Dangers which we talk and complain of to no purpose? Certainly if ever Dangers call'd for a speedy *Repentance*, ours do; but if we will be deaf to their Cries we desperately abandon our selves to the dismal and pitiless Desert of *our own* Folly and Madness.

2. Consider how much we have *all* contributed to the Dangers that are pressing upon us. I doubt if we *impartially* survey our *selves* and take a severe Account of our *own* Doings, there be very few, if any, that will be able to *acquit* themselves of having some hand in those publick *Mischiefs* that hang over us; that in *all* Particulars have behaved themselves so soberly and circumspectly as to contribute *nothing* towards the filling up the Kingdoms Iniquities. Tho' *many* of us indeed have not been carried away with the impetuous Current of open *Profaneness* and *Debauchery*, yet perhaps we have suffered our selves to be born down with the contrary Stream of *Faction*, *Schism*, or demure *Hypocrisy*; by which we have not only *scandaliz'd* our Religion, and *weaken'd* the Interest of it, *imbroided* our Government, and *disturbed* the methods of our *Happiness*; but also highly *incens'd* against us the God of *Peace* and *Truth*, and *Order*. And tho'

others of us have neither been *profane* nor *factionous*, yet it may be we have been *remiss* and *lukewarm* in *Religion*, or extreamly *unfruitful* under those rich *Manurings* and growing *Showers* which it continually affords us; by which we have mightily *provok'd* our God to remove our *Candlestick*, and leave us in the *dark*; to cut us down like *fruitless Trees* that are good for nothing, but only to burthen and cumber the ground: and if one way or 'tother we have contributed to those publick *Calamities* that threaten us, we have no other way to repair the *Injury* we have done our *Country*, but by our timely and serious *Repentance*: this is the only *Balsam* by which we can hope to *heal* those *Wounds* we have given her; and if when we have wounded we refuse to *cure* her, 'tho the Means are in our *own* hands, we are doubly *guilty* of her *Blood*, and shall be doubly *charg'd* with it whenever an *Inquisition* is made for it. So that *Repentance* is a *Debt* we owe the *Nation* for the *Mischiefs* which our *Sins* have done to it, and which we can no otherwise repair but by *repenting* of those *Sins* before it is too late, lest we leave such a *Reckoning* behind us as will *ruine* the *Kingdom*, and *undo* succeeding *Generations* to discharge it.

3. Consider how possible it is yet to prevent our *Danger* by a timely *Repentance*.

Tho'

Tho' our Condition be full of *Hazard*, yet, God be praised, it is not altogether *desperate*; tho' we are *inter pontem & fontem* descending between the Bridge and River, yet there are a thousand Accidents may *intervene*, and catch us in our Fall and set us *safe* a shore again; and that *Almighty Providence* which orders and disposes the *Issues* and *Events* of Things, hath infinite ways which we foresee not, to change the *confused* Scene of our Affairs, and reduce our *Chaos* into Order. And how *willing* and *ready* he is to do it, is visible enough by his *Long-suffering* towards us, and his *patient* Endurance of our Provocations, in expectation that at length his *goodness* may lead us to *Repentance*. How *careful* and *industrious* hath he been to *discover* Danger to us? to draw the *Curtain* from before the dark Designs of our *Enemies*, and to *unmask* their intended Mischiefs in despite of all their Arts of Concealment? And considering thro' how many *Difficulties* the Providence of God hath pressed in carrying on the happy *Discovery*, how strangely he hath *forced* it on, and scattered the Clouds before it, we have abundant Reason to acknowledge his *Readiness* to succour and relieve us, to prevent our being surprized with an unexpected Ruine, and swallowed up by it before we were aware. For what should his Aim be in

shewing us our Danger, but only to awake us to *Repentance*, that so by that *powerful* Motive he might be induced to *rescue* and *deliver* us ; why should he *warn* us so long before hand of the Blow that is falling upon us, but only to give us Space and Opportunity to *prevent* it by our timely *Repentance*? So that ever since the *Discovery* of our Danger, *Deliverance* hath been *waiting* upon us, expecting that happy moment when we would open the door of our *Repentance* to it, and invite it in, and make it welcome. But hitherto, alas ! we have shut the door against it, and made it *wait* in vain : for several Months the willing *Child* hath been struggling for Birth in the Womb of *Providence*, and yet it is unborn ; and still it struggles, but all in vain, for want of our *Repentance* to open the *Womb* to it, and promote its *travail* to a happy Birth. And do we yet stand still as Persons *unconcern'd*, when *ours*, our *Country's*, and our *Childrens* Fate depends upon the Issue of it? When we may yet be safe, if by *abandoning* our Wickedness we will but *assist* to our Deliverance, shall we stand looking on with our Hands in our Bosoms, and see it stifled in the *Womb*?

4. Consider how much our *personal Repentance* will avail us tho' we should *not* prevent our present Danger by it. For I know

know it will be objected, To what purpose should *we* repent, if *others* still go on in their *Wickedness*? Can it be hoped that *our personal* Amendment should have such a mighty *Influence* as to disperse that mighty *Cloud of Judgments* that hangs over the whole *Nation*? To which, in the first place, I answer, that perhaps it *may*. It may be there is not yet a sufficient Number of *righteous Persons* among us to move the holy God to be propitious to this *sinful Nation*; and if for the sake of *five* righteous *Persons* God would have saved a *Sodom*, why may not you hope that by adding your *selves* to the far greater number of *righteous Persons* among *us*, you may yet prevail with God to save the whole *Nation*; and for the *possible* Hope of being *Saviours* to our native *Country*, who would not make such a *cheap* and *easy* Experiment? But suppose it should *not* produce this *happy Effect*, that notwithstanding our *personal Repentance* the *Cloud* should break, and discharge a bloody *Storm* upon the *Kingdom*; yet I dare secure you, you shall never have Cause to *repent* of your *Repentance*; for God will either call *you* into his *Chambers*, shut his door upon you, and hide you for a little moment till the *Indignation* is *overpast*, or he will *turn* it into such an inestimable *Blessing* that you shall be sure to reap from it un

speakingly more *Good* than *Prejudice*; and whilst *impenitent Wretches* shall be lashed at the same time both by *God* and their own *Consciences*, whilst *they* shall be surrounded with *Darkness* and *Horror* on every side, and not be able to discover any *glimps* of *day* either within, or without, or above them; whilst *Heaven* and *Earth*, and their own *Consciences* are storming together about their *Ears*, so that which way soever they turn themselves, they are *miserable*; whilst *God* disowns them, their own *Consciences* reproach them, and the *World* will no longer help or succour them; you, being reconciled by your *Repentance* both to your *God* and your *Conscience*, will have a *safe Retreat* within your own *Bosoms*, whereinto you may retire, and be merry in spite of *Fortune*; and being *there* entertained with the ravishing sense of your *Fathers Love*, with the soft *Harmonies* of a quiet *Conscience*, and the glorious *Hopes* of a blessed *Immortality* hereafter, you will not only be enabled to *support* your share of the *Publick Calamity*, but also to *rejoyce* and *triumph* under it. So that would you be but persuaded to *repent*, I durst assure you, you shall find the *Benefit* of it either in the *Removal* of the *Judgments* you fear, or in the *Assistance* it would give you to *undergo* them bravely.

5. And lastly, Consider how *dearly* we shall repent when it is *too late*; if we do not endeavour to *prevent* our Danger by repenting *now* when we are groveling under those dreadful *Judgments* that hang lowering over us. When our *Religion, Liberties and Properties* are seized, and become a prey to our insulting *Enemies*; when our *Country* is spoiled or imbrewed in Blood by *intestine* Broils or *Forein* Invasions, and all is involved in *Ruines and Confusions* round about us; *then* we shall remember with the Tears in our Eyes that we *had once* an Opportunity to be *happy*; that if we would have been contented to part with a few *base* Lusts that did *unman* and *prostitute* our Natures, we might have been still a *blessed* and *prosperous* People; that if we would have been *wise* as to have sacrificed to Gods approaching *Judgments* our *Sensuality* and *Profaneness*, our *Faction, Oppression and Hypocrisy*, they would *then* have fairly retreated and left us in the *quiet* Enjoyment of all our *spiritual* and *temporal* Blessings we enjoy'd; whereas *now* being incensed and drawn on by our *desperate* Obstinacy, they have made a *dismal* Spoil of all, and left us nothing but our *Sins and Guilts* to bear us company in our Miseries. When we shall see our desolate *Country* that was heretofore the *Queen of Nations* sitting like a mournful

Widow

Widow in the dust, with her Head *uncrowned*, her Garments *torn*, her Breast *wounded*, and all her Parts besmeared with *Blood*; when we shall see our *Church* unpaled and all her fences trodden down by wild *Beasts*; her *Beauty* defaced, her Sun extinguished, or overcast with *Darkness* and *Confusion*; how will it cut our Hearts to think that all this is the Product of *our own* Follies, and that if we would have been persuaded *betime* to abandon our Lusts and listen to *sober* Counsels, all these *dismal* Ruins and Desolations might have easily been *prevented*. O then we shall lament our Follies and wring our woful hands, and wish a thousand and a thousand times that we had been wiser before it was *too late*! Seeing therefore it is not *yet* too late, let us for once *resolve* to make a tryal what good our *Repentance* can do the *Publick*; and O would to God we would once *conspire* to make this blessed Experiment! and if upon our making it, a *Cure* doth not yet follow, if we do not sensibly perceive our *Grievances* abate, our *Dangers* vanish, our *Enemies* weakened and disheartned, and our broken *Counsels* retrieved and united in the *publick* Good, I will be contented to undergo *Cassandra's* Fate never to be *believed* in my Affirmations more. For this I am sure of, *Repentance* cannot fail of a *good* Effect, and that be-

fides

sides all the Good it would do us by its own *natural* and *necessary Influence*, it would *reconcile Him* to us that hath the disposal of our Fate, and then all would go well, and *God even our own God would give us his blessing.* Which he of his infinite Mercy grant, to whom with his eternal Son and Spirit be ascribed of us and all the world all Honour and Glory and Power from this time forth and for evermore. *Amen*

MATTHEW

MATTHEW III. 8.

Bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

THese Words are a Part of *John Baptist's* Sermon to the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* of whom mention is made in the foregoing Verse: the *first* of which being a sort of *demure* and *formal* Hypocrites, who under *religious* Pretences shrouded the blackest Villanies; the *second*, a Company of *Atheistical* Debauches, who, to supersede the troublesome Obligations of their *Consciences*, and to obtain of themselves a free Dispensation to be wicked, denied the Existence of *Spirits* and the Life to come. The *Baptist*, upon their Address to be admitted to his *Baptism*, sharply reprehends them both under one common Name, *O Generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come!* and then he goes on, *Bring forth fruits meet for Repentance.* As much as if he should have said, "O ye worst of men, ye brood of venomous Miscreants! I perceive by your coming hither some body or other hath alarmed you with the Forewarnings of that dreadful Vengeance that is falling upon this Generation; and now to prevent it, you

“ you pretend *Repentance* of your Sins,
 “ because you have heard that I baptize
 “ with *Water* unto *Repentance*, you would
 “ needs assume this *outward* Badge of Pe-
 “ nitents. But I know you well enough,
 “ ye are a pack of arrant *Knaves* and *Hy-*
 “ pocrites, and howsoever at present you
 “ may be frightened into a demure Pretence
 “ of *Repentance*, I know your Hearts are
 “ as *wicked* as ever, and that you will not
 “ part with *one* of those *Lusts* which ren-
 “ der you so *base* and *infamous*. And there-
 “ fore, for my part, till I have better Hopes
 “ of you, I am resolved I will have nothing
 “ to do with you. Go therefore, *bring*
 “ forth fruits meet for repentance; let me see
 “ by your Actions that you are Penitents in-
 “ deed, and then if you come I shall gladly
 “ receive you to this my solemn *Sacrament*
 of *Repentance*. This I take to be the most
natural and *genuine* Sense of the Words, and
 I know but one Objection of any weight
 against it, that whereas this Account makes
John Baptist to have refused them his *Bap-*
tism, other Texts of *Scripture* seem to assert,
 that they *themselves* refused to be *baptised* of
 him, and they did not come to him under
 a pretence of *Repentance*, but upon a Design
 to *cavil* with him, and *expose* his *Baptism* to
 the *People*: for *Luke* 7. 30. it is said, that
 the *Pharisees* and *Lawyers* rejected the counsel

of God against themselves, i. e. the Counsel which God, by *John* the Baptist, gave them; *being not baptised of him*; but what Counsel was it that they rejected? Was it the Counsel of being *baptised*? No such matter; for *John Baptist* never advised them to it, but the Counsel he gave them was to *repent*, and to *bring forth fruits meet for Repentance*. And this they rejected; for which they were not baptised of him. Not but that they would have been, if they could; for it is expressly said in the Verse foregoing my Text, that they *came* to *John's* Baptism, but *John* knowing their *Hypocrisy* would by no means admit them to it, till they had first brought forth such *Fruits* as were *meet* and *proper* for *Repentance*. In handling of which words, I shall endeavour these Three things:

1. To shew you what this *Repentance* is of which he exhorts them to bring forth the *meet Fruits*.

2. What the *meet Fruits* of this *Repentance* are.

3. The Necessity of bringing forth such *Fruits*.

1. What this *Repentance* is of which the Baptist here exhorts them to bring forth *meet Fruits*? To which I answer, briefly, that by *Repentance* we are to understand a sincere and thorough change of Mind, which as it hath been often observed, is the pro-

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per signification of *μετάνοια*, which is the word which the *New Testament* most commonly uses for *Repentance*. And then the *Mind* is *chang'd*, when the prevailing *Purpose* and *Resolution* of it is *altered*; when upon a due *Consideration* of the *Mischief*, *Indecency*, or *Inconvenience* of his *present Resolution*, a Man is effectually persuaded into a *contrary Purpose*, his *Mind*, we say, is *chang'd*; because he hath now a *contrary Judgment* of things, which form his *Will* into a *contrary Resolution*: and when once our *Mind* is thus *chang'd* as to any *Design* or *Course of Action* we are then said to *repent* of it. So that to *repent* of our *Sins*, is to be effectually *chang'd* and *alter'd* in our *Minds* concerning them, so as that whereas *before* we did in our *practical Judgment* prefer them at least *pro hic & nunc* before our duty, and in our *Will* embrace and resolutely *adhere* to them, we do *now* upon cool *Deliberation* pronounce them to be the *worst* of *Evils*, and as such do heartily purpose and resolve to *forsake* them. And in this consists the *Nature* and *Essence* of *Repentance*, viz. in a *firm Resolution* to *forsake* our *Sins* upon *cool* and *deliberate Judgment*. Where, by *Resolution* I do not mean a mere *Logical Conclusion* by way of *Inference* from *Premises*, that such or such a thing is best and fittest to be done; for in this there is no *Choice*, the *Proceedings* of
our

our Reason being as necessary as those of our Sense; and where there is no Choice, there can be no Virtue. But the Resolution of Repentance is an Act of the Will, viz. its decretory and definitive Sentence for the actual Prosecution of such a Course as upon calm Deliberation is proposed as that which is most fit and necessary. For suppose our Reason and Sense as two Parties pleading their respective Causes and Interests, the one for Virtue, and the other for Vice; and suppose that in the Conclusion, either the Matter be Left in equilibrio between them, or that Reason hath baffled Sense, and obtained a clear Conviction that the Cause of Virtue is infinitely best and most preferable, but that still the Will is in suspense, and hath not peremptorily decreed either one way or t' other; why hitherto all that hath been done is but mere Speculation, there is nothing of Choice in it, nothing of Virtue, nor consequently of Repentance. But when upon a through hearing of both Parties, the Will interposes its Sovereignty, and pronounces Sentence on Reason and Virtue's side, this is my final Resolution, and this by the Grace of God I will stand to, I will from henceforth submit to my Duty, how difficult soever it be, and discharge those base mischievous Lusts of mine what Temptations soever may assault me when, I say, our Will with

good

good *Advice* and with a full *Consent* hath pronounced this peremptory *Decree* and *Resolution*, our *Mind* is changed and our *Repentance* actually commenc'd. Thus the *Prodigal Son*, for instance, while he was considering with himself the happy State he was fallen from, *How many hired Servants of my Father have bread enough and to spare, and the miserable Condition he was fallen into, and I perish with hunger,* was only in the *Porch* and *Entry* of *Repentance*, and had he staid there and gone no farther, all this had been nothing but a dead *Speculation*, notwithstanding which he would have *perished* in his Sin. But when from hence he proceeded to that peremptory *Resolution*, *I will arise and go to my Father*, in that very Moment he became a sincere *Penitent*; and if in that instant he had been struck dead before ever he had taken one step towards his *Father*, he had dyed in a State of *Repentance*. For it is plain his *Mind* was changed, he had put off the *old man* and put on the *new*, he had formed a new *Judgment* and a new *Resolution*; and if he had immediately dyed, he had died in Subjection to God, and would have arose and gone to his *Father*, as he did while he lived. So that the precise Notion of *Repentance*, you see, consists in the Change of our *Mind*, that is, of our *Judgment* and *Resolution*: and hence it is

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called being renewed in the spirit of our Mind, Ephes. iv 23. and being transformed by the renewing of our Mind Rom. xii. 2. Consonantly to which, Hierocles, tho' an Heathen, thus defines Repentance, ἡ δὲ μετάνοια αὐτὴ φιλοσοφία ἀρχὴ γινεται, &c. that is, Repentance is the beginning of Philosophy, 'tis a renunciation of Evil Courses, and a Preparation to a Life not to be repented of. So that when a Man hath repented, saith he, he neither quits *real* for *imaginary* Goods, nor chooses *Evil* for fear of *unfortunate* Accidents; but conforms his *Judgment* and submits his *Will* to the divine *Canons*. And thus you see what that Repentance is of which we are here bid to bring forth *meet Fruits*.

2. I Proceed in the next place to shew what those *Fruits* are which are *meet* for this Repentance. In general, they are such *Fruits* or *Works* as are natural and agreeable to such an inward Change of Mind and Resolution as Repentance imports, or such as may give a plain Demonstration that you are effectually convinced in your *Judgment* of the Baseness and Malignity of your past *sinful* Courses, and sincerely resolved to *discard* and *renounce* them for the future. For the *Fruits* of Repentance are nothing but the proper Acts and Operations of it, and 'tis then and then only that we bring forth these *Fruits*, when the *Effects* of a *real* Repentance do appear in our Life and

and *Conversation*, and our *Actions* do signify that our *Judgment* *condemns* our Faults, and our *Will* *renounces* them. And according to this account, the *Fruits* of *Repentance* may be reduced to these following Particulars.

1. An *actual* and *thorough* Reformation.
2. A *profound* Humility and Self-Abasement.
3. A *great* and *tender* Modesty in our Expectation.
4. Candor and Gentleness towards *others*:
5. Simplicity and Integrity of Manners towards the *offended* Party.
6. Caution and Wariness for the future not to *offend* again in the same or the like Instances.

1. One necessary *Fruit* and *Effect* of our *Repentance* is an *actual* and *thorough* Reformation. If those invisible *Springs* of action the *Judgment* and the *Will* be changed and rectified, the *Wheels* of Affection and the *Hand* of *Practice* must necessarily move more *regularly* and *orderly*: For all our inferior Powers being subject to the Authority of the *Will*, and carried about with the swing of this *Primum Mobile*, this first great *Orb* of the *Soul*, do naturally apply themselves to the Execution of whatsoever *that* decrees and resolves on; and to suppose a Man's *Judgment* and *Will* to be reformed when his *Life* is not, is to suppose that he

is not a *voluntary* Agent but a piece of *Clock-work*, that he is not determined in his *Motions* by *Choice* and *Deliberation*, but by *Weights* and *Plummetts*, by necessary *Pressures* and *Impulses*; which Supposal not only strips him out of all capacity of *Repentance*, but also contradicts all *Experience*. For this we are as sensible of as we are of our *Hunger* and *Thirst*, that while we are our selves, and can *deliberate* and *chuse*, we do nothing but what we *will*, nothing but what we *judge* to be good *pro hic & nunc*, and nothing but what we *chuse* upon so *judging*. So that for a Man to pretend to be a *Penitent* in his *Heart* whilst he is *unreformed* in his *Life*, is to *lie* against his own *Experience*. He knows and feels that what he doth he doth *voluntarily*, with *Approbation* of *Judgment* and *Consent* of *Will*; and therefore if his *Actions* are bad, his *Judgment* and *Will* must be so too. You say you do *heartily repent* of your *Sins*, by which, if you understand what you say, you mean you do absolutely *condemn* them in your *Judgment*, and peremptorily *disclaim* them in your *Will*; but still you must confess you lead a *bad* *Life* and *persist* in many of those *sinful* *Courses* of which you hope you have *heartily* repented: which is as much as if you should say, I am fully resolved I will play the *Knave* no more, but yet I must

I must confess I do *lye* and *cheat* as much as ever; I am peremptorily determined to be very *temperate* and *chaste*, but I must acknowledge I am very often *drunk*, and do very often *whore*; that is to say, you do what you won't do, you won't do what you do, your *Will* hath no Influence on your *Actions*, your *Actions* no relation to your *Will*, there is no Communication nor Intercourse between your Power of *choosing* and your Power of *acting*; so that as you cannot derive the Good that is in your *Will* to your *Practice*, so neither can you attribute the Evil that is in your *Practice* to your *Will*; all which is as false, and you know it is so, as any *Contradiction* in Nature. So that a thorough *Reformation* of Life, you see, is a necessary *Fruit* and *Effect* of *Repentance*, and you may as well suppose a *Sin* without Light, as *Repentance* without Amendment, if there be Time and Opportunity for it; for if a Man out-lives the Change of his *Mind*, there is not a more necessary Connexion between his *Life* and his *Motion*, than there is between the Change of his *Mind* and the Reformation of his *Manners*. And hence we find, that to *repent* and turn from our *evil* ways, to *repent* and do our *first* Works, to *repent* and be *converted*, to *repent* and turn to *God*, are in Scripture very often put together to denote the *improvement*

Connexion that there is between them.

2. Another necessary Fruit and Effect of our *Repentance* is a profound *Humility* and *Self-Abasement*; for between *Pride* and *Repentance* there is as direct an Opposition, as between any *Vice* and *Vertue* whatsoever. To *repent* of a Fault is to be *ashamed* of it, to *condemn* and *abhor* ones self for it, to *hate* and *renounce* it as vile and abominable; and for a Man to do *this*, and at the same time to be highly opinionated of his own *Desert*, and plumed with glorious *Conceits* of *himself*, is impossible: such a *Senie* of our own *Shame* and *Vileness* as is implied in a serious and hearty *Repentance*, can no more consist with a *haughty* Look, a *puffed* and *self-conceited* Mind, than Light with Darkness, or excessive Heat with bitter Cold. And upon this Account the *Baptist* might well upbraid the *Pharisees*, who were a Sect of the most *bloated* Monsters that appeared in *humane* Forms; and yet by offering themselves to his *Baptism* of *Repentance*, pretend to be true Penitents. O ye proud *Wretches*, do you pretend to *Repentance*? you that have swelled your selves with *Self-Conceit* till ye are ready to burst again! you that are so full of your selves that you can never forbear overflowing with self Applause and *Vain* glory! that like a company of *Bladders* are blown up with your own *Breath*, and swell and look big, and yet have nothing

but Wind in you! go, bring forth fruits meet for Repentance; let me see you grow more humble, mean and prostrate in your own Opinions, and when by this Effect I am satisfied that you are Penitents indeed, I will readily admit you to this my Baptism of Repentance. And God knows, we have too many such Pharisaical Pretenders to Repentance, that under a dejected Look, a solemn Face and whining Tone do carry as haughty self-conceited Minds as the proudest Pharisees of them all; that having been affected a little with the Sense of their Sins, and cast down with the frightful Apprehensions of God's Wrath and Displeasure, or that having suffered the Terrors of the Spleen, and acted through a few tragical Scenes of Melancholy, Fancy, and Passion, are presently borne aloft out of the Spirit of Bondage, as they call it, with such towering and magnificent Conceits of their own Sanctity and Goodness, as causes them to look down with Contempt upon ordinary Mortals, to despise their Superiors, and vilify their Betters, and separate themselves into Parties, that monopolize all Sanctity and Godliness to themselves; which, whatsoever these Men may think, is doubtless a very dangerous Symptom of a rotten and diseased Repentance. For he that hath truly repented of his Sins, must necessarily have discovered Cause enough in them to humble and abase

himself in his own Eyes; and he that after such a Prospect of his own *Baseness* and *Vileness* as is necessary to *Repentance*, can upon the next Review *applaud* and *admire* himself, and grow *fond* and *conceited* of his own Excellencies, hath a Judgment with two Ends like a *Prospective*, with which he can *lessen* or *magnify* himself as oft as he pleases.

3. Another necessary Fruit of *Repentance* is *Modesty*. He that is so *thoroughly* sensible of a Fault as heartily to *repent* of it, will be thereby instructed to behave himself more *modestly* for the future. The Sense of his Fault will *cool* his Confidence, and render him more *bashful* and *moderate* in all his Pretensions and Expectations. Should I see a Company of *Rebels*, upon a Pretence of having *repented* of their *Disloyalty*, not only lay Claim to their Prince's *Mercy*, but presently fall foul upon his faithful *Adherents*, and call *themselves* his best and most loyal *Subjects*, and pretend to his greatest *Favours* and *Rewards*; I should certainly suspect that they had *no sense* of their Guilt, but that in their Hearts they were as very *Rebels* as ever. And thus, when upon pretence that having heartily *repented* of our *Rebellions* against God, we presently grow *bold* and *confident*, and begin to *crow* over those who were never involved in our Guilts, as a company of *car-nal* and *moral* Wretches; when we are im-
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diately *flushed* with triumphant Assurances of God's Love, and our *Loyalty* to him, and nothing will serve our Turns but to be presently counted his *Darlings* and *Favourites*, it is a very ill sign that we were never yet *truly* ashamed of our *Rebellions*; that whatever we pretend, our *Wills* are as stubborn and disloyal as ever. And this was the true *Genius* of the *Pharisees* whom the *Baptist* doth here so severely reprehend; who being a *proud* and *conceited* Generation, as I shewed you before, made no doubt but *God* valued them at the same rate as *they* valued *themselves*; and tho' in reality they were a Pack of as ill-condition'd *Knaves* as ever walked demurely under the Cloak of *Religion*, tho' they were as *factious* and *turbulent*, as *covetous*, *gripping* and *oppressive* as the *Devil* himself could make them, yet because forsooth they were *zealous* for their *Party*, and the *Opinions* of their *Sect*, and the *humble Modes* and *Affectations* that distinguish'd them from other Men, they blew themselves up into as high a *Confidence* of God's Favour to them, as if they had been the most *Saintly* and *God-like* Souls in the World, and did so wholly ingross and *monopolize* the Kindness of Heaven to *themselves*, that they would scarce allow the least share of it to any of the *rest* of Mankind; notwithstanding which they pretended to be *Penitents*, and as such, it seems

seems would fain have been admitted to *John's Baptism*. But he, considering how *inconsistent* their Humour was to their Pretence, bids them go *bring forth fruits meet for Repentance*: As much as if he should have said, " You are a special sort of Penitents in-
" deed! one would think by the Confi-
" dence of your Talk and Behaviour, you
" had no Sins to repent of: why you are
" the godly Party, the only Favourites of
" Heaven, and will allow none but your
" selves to pretend to the Smiles of God's
" Countenance. Go for shame; if you
" would be accounted Penitents, behave
" your selves as such, learn to be more mo-
" dest, to live as becomes Persons that are
" deeply affected with their Sins and asha-
" med of their Guilt, and then perhaps I
" may see cause to admit you to my *Bap-
tism*. And certainly 'tis a very ill sign, when
after a few Pangs of *Sorrow* and *Compunction*
Men are Presently perking up into *Confidence*
and *Assurance*; when they will needs be at
the Top of the *Ladder* before ever they have
touched the lowermost *Rounds*, and be ga-
ping for secret *Incomes* and *Manifestations* of
God's Love before they have manifested
their *Repentance* by their *Obedience* to him.
Sure if they were but as *sensible* of their Guilt
as they *ought* to be, they would be content-
ed to lie still a while with their Mouths in
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the Dust, and be satisfied that they are not *desperate* of being restored to God's Favour, but are admitted to *hope well*, that by God's Blessing on their *Endeavours* they shall at length arrive to such a state of *Goodness* as will intitle them to God's *Favour* and *eternal* Life. And such *Modesty* the *Sense* and *Shame* of their Guilt would teach them if it were such as is necessary to an *heartly* and *unfeigned* Repentance,

4. Another necessary Fruit of Repentance is *Candor* and *Gentleness* towards others. He that hath been so *affected* with the sense of his *own* Faults as heartily to *repent* of them, will not be very forward to *censure* and *condemn* the Faults of *others*; his Mind is so *oppressed* with the load of his *own* Sins, that he is not at leisure to find Fault with *other* Men; or if he were, yet deeply *conscious*, as he is, what *abundant* Reason he hath to find Fault with *himself*, that gags and silences him. His *own* Sins fly in his Face while he is censuring *other* Mens; while he is pertly exposing his *Neighbours* Fault, his *Conscience* twits him in the Teeth, and tells him, the *Devil* rebukes Sin, so that in his own defence he is forced to be *candid* and *favourable* to others, being conscious should he severely reflect upon *their* Faults, he should thereby libel and upbraid his *own*. And indeed, 'tis a certain sign that Men have

have little or no *Sense* of the Evil and Baseness of their *own* Sins, when they are so forward and *slippant* in animadverting upon other Mens. Should you hear a *deformed Wretch* exposing another Man for the Blemishes of his Nature, the *Disproportion* of his Parts, or the *Irregularity* of his Features, you would doubtless conclude that either he imagin'd himself to be very *handsom*, or designed to make a *Satyr* on his own *Ugliness*. And so when I hear Men that are great Sinners *themselves* briskly declaiming against the Sins of *others*, I cannot but conclude that either they conceit themselves to be *innocent*, or have a mind to expose their *own* Guilt and Shame; but to be sure, were they but as *sensible* of their *own* Shame as they ought to be, that would restrain them from throwing Dirt upon others. And doubtless it was upon this Consideration among others, that the *Baptist* doth here so tartly upbraid the *Pharisees*; who tho' they had rendered themselves by their *malignant* Tempers and Practices the greatest *Pests* and *Mischiefs* of *Society*, the most direct *Antipodes* to the Nature of God, and the eternal Laws of *Righteousness*, were yet the severest *Condemners* of other Mens Actions in the World. What tragical Clamours did they make against the *Publicans* and *Sinners* for playing the *Busy* while they themselves plaid the

the *Devil*? What base Interpretations did they make of the *holy* and *innocent* Freedoms of our *Saviour*, whom because he was not of their *sour* and *unsoctable* Temper, they damned for a *Wine-bibber*, and a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*? In a word, who was more forward than they to *emblazon* the Faults of *other* Men, to fetch and carry *scandalous* Reports, and shake their Heads at the Iniquities of the *Times*, when, God knows, they *themselves* were the greatest *Plagues* and *Scandals* of the Age they lived in? And with all this *Rancor* and *Bitterness* of Temper they would needs pretend to be *Penitents*; upon which the Baptist bids them *bring forth* such *Fruits* as were proper for *Penitents*. As if he should have said, “One
“ may easily discern what *goodly* *Penitents*
“ you are, how *deeply* you are affected with
“ your *own* Sins by the Noise and Glamour
“ you make against *other* Mens: you have
“ Wickedness enough of your *own* to *censure*
“ and make *Invectives* on, but while you
“ should be looking *inwards*, your Eyes
“ are in the *Ends* of the Earth, observing
“ *other* Mens Faults and Miscarriages. Go,
“ if you would appear to be *Penitents*,
“ learn to be more *severe* upon your *selves*
“ and more *candid* to *other* Men, to make
“ the worst of your *own* Faults, and the
“ *best* of your *Neighbours*: and then I shall
“ have

“ have reason to hope that you are Penitents
“ *indeed*. But 'tis fullsome *Hypocrisy* for
Men to pretend to *Repentance* whilst they are
bitterly *ensorious* and apt to judge hardly of
other Men. And to Men of understanding
there is nothing can be more *ridiculous*, than
to see one that is just fallen off from a *lute*
and *dissolute* Course of Life, presently set up
for a *censor* of the *Age*, and with a *wise*
and *serious* Forehead *animadverting* upon
the *Freedom*s, and *declaiming* against the
Debaucheries of this or t'other Man; which
whatsoever he may think, is a plain De-
monstration that he hath never been *duly*
affected with the Sense of his *own* Sin, and
that he is only *changing* one kind of *Wicked-*
ness for another. For were he but *thoroughly*
convinced how bad he hath been *himself*, he
would be ashamed to *clamour*, and *inveigh*
against other Men, and the great sense he
would have of the *Beam* in his *own* Eye,
would make him less apt to take notice of
the *Mote* in his *Neighbours*.

5. Another necessary Fruit of Repentance is,
Simplicity of Heart and *Integrity* of Manners
towards the *Party* offended, for tho'tis a
Maxim in *Policy* not to trust to a reconciled
Enemy, yet could I be secure of the *Sincerity*
of his *Reconciliation*, I should have more rea-
son to trust him than a *constant* Friend; be-
cause if he be *thoroughly* sensible that he hath
unjustly

unjustly offended me and hath *heartily* repented of it, 'tis reasonably to be supposed that he will not only use me as a *Friend* for the future, but as a *Friend* whom he hath *injur'd* and unjustly *provoked*, and consequently that the sense of the *Injury* he hath done me, will make him *supererogate* in Friendship, and by a *Superabundance* of good Offices, endeavour not only to *discharge* what the Laws of *Friendship* exact, but also to *expiate* the *unjust* Provocations he hath given me. For the very *Sense* of a past Injury, when it is *heartily* repented of, doth naturally kindle into a *cordial* Affection towards him whom we have *injured*: And thus, if we have *heartily* repented of our Sins against God, the *Sense* of what is *past* will render us more *sincere* and *cordial* to him for the *future*; and by how much the more we have *provoked* and *offended* him, by so much the more *studious* we shall be to *serve* and *obey* him. But if our pretended *Repentance* produces in us no other Effect but an *outward* Shew of Obedience, and renders us more *studious* to *appear* good than to be so; if it puts us upon *picking* and *chusing* our Duty, upon being *zealous* about *small* things to compensate our Negligence and Remissness about *great*, it is an infallible sign that it is merely *pretended*, and that all the *Shews* we make of *Reconciliation* are nothing but
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meer *Vizards* and *Counterfeits*. And such was the Temper and Disposition of the *Pharisees*, they took care to *disguise* themselves in a pompous *Form* of *Godliness*, and to carry a very demure and sanctified *Outside*. Their *Looks* were solemn, austere, and mortified, their *Tongues* all tipt with the *Language* of *Canaan*, their *Motions* and *Gestures* were artificially composed to the *tune* of a humble and heavenly Mind. They *fasted* thrice a Week, and *prayed* so long that they made all the Streets ring again with their *loud* and *clamorous* Devotions, and gave *Alms* too now and then in a good *Eccho* whence they might be sure to hear their Charities *resounded* after them in *Praises* and *Commendations*. They kept a mighty Noise about the *Fringes* and *Phylacteries*, the *external* Circumstances and Appendages of *Religion*, and were most zealous Assertors of *pure Ordinances* and *pure Worship*: but under all this Formality our *Saviour* tells them they were *whited Sepulchers*, who tho' they look gloriously *without*, are full of Rottenness *within*. For this demure *Outside* of theirs was only a *Disguise* under which they cheated and plaid the *Knaves* more securely. Their *long* Prayers were nothing but specious Introductions to their *Rapines* and *Oppressions*. Their *Alms* were their *Decoys* which they sent forth on purpose to train *simple* and *well-meaning* People

pie into their nets. Their zeale for the *Mint and Cummin* was the varnish of their *Fraud and Injustice*. Their *long Fasts* for *Reformation* were stirups to their *Ambition* of being uppermost, and their constant *Refreshments* after them were *Widows and Orphans* tears. In a word, they would cheat in faintly *Language*, play the *Knaves* with their *Hands and Eyes* lift up to *Heaven*, and while they seemed to be as *fervent* as *Angels* in their *Devotions*, they were as *false* and *treacherous* as *Devils* in their *Dealings*. And yet these *base* People would needs have been admitted for *Penitents* to the *Baptism* of *John*; who considering the *Inconsistency* of their *Temper* with their *Pretence* tartly upbraids them and bids them *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; that is, learn to be more *simple* and *sincere* in their *Carriage* towards their offended *God*, study more to be *Penitents* than to *appear* such; contract your *Shew* into *Reality*, and let it appear by your *sincere Respect* to *God*, and *Devotion* to his *Service*, that you do *heartily* repent of your *Rebellions* against him. And certainly there can be nothing more *suspicious* than for a young *Penitent* to affect to make a great *Show of Religion*; for true *Repentance* is naturally *humble* and *modest*, it shuns the *Theater*, the tops of houses, and the corners of *Streets*, and is best pleased with *Silence*

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and *Retirement*; and provided *God* sees its Tears and hears its Sighs and holy Purposes, it desires no other *Spectator* or *Auditor*. For the great Design of a *Penitent* is to reconcile himself to *God*, and if he be but so *sensible* of his Sin as *heartily* to repent of it; by how much the more he hath *offended* him for the time *past*, by so much the more he will study to *please* him for the time *to come*.

6. And lastly, Another necessary Fruit of *Repentance* is *Caution* and *Wariness* for the *future* not to offend again in the same or the like Instances. For *Repentance* is a *penal Duty* in which a Man undergoes some degree of the *smart* and *punishment* of his Fault, in which he induces the *Shame* and *Confusion* of a *guilty* Mind, the *Regrets* and *Remorses* of an *awaken'd* Conscience; and the burnt Child, we say, will dread the Fire. He that hath undergone the *severe* Discipline of a *deep* and *solemn* *Repentance* will be sure to take *warning* by it; and be very *cautious* for the *future* not to approach those sins for which he hath *smarted* so severely. And hence we find that *Repentance* is not only expressed in Scripture by *μετάνοια* which signifies a Change of Mind, but also by *μετάνησις* which signifies an *After-Care*; which shews that though the *Essence* of *Repentance* consists in the *μετάνοια* or *Change* of our Mind, yet *μετάνησις*, or an *After-Care* to avoid those

those sins from which our Minds are changed and converted, is a necessary *Effect* and *Fruit* of Repentance; it being an usual *Figure* in *Scripture* to express *Causes* by their most natural and easie Effects. And indeed when I see Men boldly *approaching* and *venturing* towards those Vices of which they pretend to have *heartily* repented, I cannot but suspect that their *Repentance* is nothing but a *Pretence*, that 'twas only a present *Pet* and *Dislike* that they took against their sin upon some ungrateful *Accident*, or under a sudden *Qualm* of Conscience, and that it never proceeded so far as to a *cool* and *deliberate* Change of their Judgment and Resolution concerning it. For certainly had they undergone those *Lashes* of Conscience, those *sharp* and *cutting* Reflections that are usually necessary to *prepare* the way for such a *Change*, they could never be so fool-hardy as to *play upon the hole of the Asp* again, and to thrust their hands into the den of the Cockatrice after they have been so severely *stung* by it; and the Remembrance of those *Agonies* of Soul, those *Spasms* and *Convulsions* of Conscience which their sin hath already cost them, would make them *tremble* to think of it and be instead of a *Sea-mark* to forewarn and terrify them from approaching it again. But such was the humour of the *Pharisees*, that though they pretended to be *Penitents*, yet

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when it served their *Cause* and *Interest* they were as *bold* and *venturous* at an *evil Action* as ever. For so our *Saviour* long after this *Reprehension* of the *Baptist*, and consequently after this their pretence of *Repentance*, charges them with being as *intimate* and *familiar* with their *old Vices* as ever. It was their way indeed, and so it was always, to make their Religion a *Cloak* and *Pretence* for their *Wickedness*; but to serve their own *Faction*, which they called propagating the *Glory of God*, they esteemed nothing *unlawful*. And though in any point that was repugnant to the *Interest* of their *Sect* they were the most *nice* and *scrupulous* People in the *World*; yet to serve their *Cause* they could *lie* and *forswear* themselves with the help of a juggling *Reserve* or *Distinction*, as our *Saviour* observes of them *Math. xxiii. 16*. And no doubt but they could have taken *Oaths* and *Sacraments* too against their *Consciences* to keep their *Places* in the *Sanhedrim*, and there carry on their *factious* and *turbulent* Designs. It being therefore evident by their being so *venturous* upon *sinful Actions*, that their Pretence to *Repentance* was *false*, the *Baptist* dismisses them with this severe *Admonition*, go bring forth *Fruits meet for Repentance*; i. e. let me see you more wary and *cautious* of running into those *sinful Courses* in which you now pretend to *repent*, and then

then I shall have some reason to *believe* that you are *Penitents* indeed. And certainly while a Man affects to draw *near* to his *old* Sins, and to dwell in the *Neighbourhood* of them, whilst he delights in their *Remembrance*, and loves to *sport* and *entertain* himself with their phantastick Pleasures, while he affects to dwell within *View* of their Temptations, to venture to the very *Edge* and *Brink* of them, to the very *utmost* Limits of *lawful* and *innocent*; it is a very ill sign that he never had that thorough Sense of their *Malignity* and *Danger* that is necessary to an hearty *Repentance*; for if he had, he would be *afraid* of all *Approaches* and *Tendencies* towards them, and be ready to *start* and *run* away not only from the *sins* themselves but even from their *Appearances* and *Resemblances*.

And thus I have endeavoured to give you an Account of the natural *Fruits* and *Effects* of true *Repentance*, by considering of which and impartially consulting our own *Experience* of our selves, we may easily determine whether the *Repentance* we pretend to, if we pretend to any at all, be *true* or *false*. We live in an *Age* that doth so abound with all *sorts* and *degrees* of *Wickedness*, that a Man can hardly mention any kind of *Wickedness*, or *party* of wicked men that are branded for such either in *Sacred* or *Profane* History, but

it is presently suspected that his design is to reproach and expose some *Party* or other among our selves. And I confess if men will set themselves to *guessing* who is meant by the *Pharisees*, who by the *Sadducees*, they may find *Parallels* enough of both in this *degenerate* Age; and, God knows they go together too often now in pursuance of worse *Designs* than those *Sadducees* and *Pharisees* that came together to *John's Baptism*. But if any should ask me who or what *Party* of Men it is I reflect upon in these severe *Representations* I have made of *Pharisaical Pretenders to Repentance*, I can truly answer that I intend no *one Party* of whatsoever Denomination; there being among *all Parties* a great many that do not so much as pretend to *Repentance*, and among *most*, as I verily hope, a great many that do more then *pretend* to it. But the *Pharisees* whom I mean are those whom the *Baptist* and after him our *Saviour* himself do so smartly inveigh against; and if you please to consult St. *Mathew* xxiii. you will there find them treated with much more *Severity* by the meekest and most *charitable* Person that ever was. But if in any *Party* among our selves there be any such *Hypocrites* and *false Pretenders to Repentance* as these *Pharisees* were, as I doubt there are too many among *all Parties*, I must then ingenuously acknowledge that I mean *them* too.

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And if any thing that hath been said should reflect upon and gall them, they ought to consider that that is their *own* Fault. They may avoid *being* Hypocrites, but we must not avoid *declaiming* against *Hypocrisy*, and when ever we do so, we *must* reflect upon them whether we will or no. If Men will be *Hypocrites*, our *Saviour's Sermon* as well as *this* will upbraid and expose them, and if it doth so, 'tis not *his* Fault but *theirs* who made *themselves* obnoxious to his *Satyr* and *Invectives*. The only way for you to avoid the Edge of such Reflections is to become *honest* and *sincere Penitents*, but if you will not, you must thank *your selves* if it cuts and wounds you. For if our *Saviour* himself had stood this day in this Place, and preached over his *Sermon* to the *Pharisees*, it would have been impossible for you not to have been *touched* and *concerned* at it, and if you should be so disingenuous as to fall foul on *me*, as *they* did on *him*, I will only propose *St. Paul's Quere* to you, *Am I therefore become your Enemy, because I tell you the Truth?* and so I have done with the second thing proposed, which was to shew you what are the proper *Fruits* and *Effects* of Repentance.

3. I now proceed to the *Third* and *last* Argument, namely to shew the *indispensible Necessity* of bringing forth these *Fruits*, which I shall endeavour to make appear by the following Instances.

1. That we should bring forth these *meet Fruits* of Repentance is necessary to the *Satisfaction* of God.

2. It is necessary to the *Satisfaction* of our own *Consciences*.

3. It is necessary to the *Obligation* of Repentance.

4. It is necessary to the *Perfection* of our *Natures*.

1. That we should bring forth these *meet Fruits* of Repentance is necessary to the *Satisfaction* of God. For though it be wholly owing to *Christ's Satisfaction*, that lost Sinners are admitted to a Possibility of *recovering* themselves by the *After-game* of Repentance, yet God we see hath declared, that *without* our Repentance he will not be *satisfied*. Neither indeed doth *Christ's Satisfaction* extend to final *Impenitence*, it cancels *none* of our Guilt but only those which we heartily *repent* of, but as to all the *rest* we are as accountable to the *Tribunal* of God as if he had *never* died for us. So that all the Favour which the meritorious *satisfaction* of our Saviour hath obtained for us is only this, that our Repentance shall be accepted instead of our *Punishment*, that is, that if we unfeignedly *repent* of our sins, we shall thereupon be set as right in the sight of God and in the court of Heaven, as if we had undergone the *utmost* Rigor of the Law. So that now our
Repentance

Repentance being accepted of by God instead of our *Punishment*, it is necessary that it should be such a *Repentance* as doth in some measure *answer* and *fulfil* the Ends of our *Punishment*. For since 'tis for *wise* and *good* Ends that God Punishes, it is not to be expected that he will accept of any thing in the stead of our *Punishment* which doth not in some measure *fulfil* and *accomplish* those Ends; and this no *Repentance* can do but that which produces the proper *Fruits* of *Repentance*. For the principal End of *Punishment* is either to amend the *Criminal* himself, or to warn *others* not to imitate his *Sins* by the Example of his *Sufferings*, which Ends can never be effected by our *Repentance* unless it produce in us the visible *Fruits* of *Amendment*. For suppose it possible that I should have *internally* repented, *i. e.* that my *Mind* should be really *chang'd*, that in my *Judgment* I should absolutely *condemn* my sinful Courses, and in my *Will* I should be peremptorily *resolved* against them, and no actual and visible *Reformation* should follow; if this I say were possible, it is plain my *Repentance* would be wholly *ineffectual* both as to my own *Amendment* and the *Amendment* of *others*. If indeed I actually *avoided* the *Sins* I condemn and am resolved against, my *Repentance* would effect the Ends of my *Punishment*, that is, it would make me a
better

better Man, it would *reform* my Nature, *rectify* my Motions, and *extinguish* my bad Inclinations and corrupt Principles, and prove an effectual Means to reform *others* too ; who by the *good Example* of my *Actions* might be as Effectually wrought upon, as by the *sad Example* of my *Sufferings*. And God having thus obtained his Ends by my *Repentance*, there is very good reason why he should dispence with my *Punishment*. But if after I have *condemned* my Sin and *resolved* against it, neither my *self* nor *other* Men can be *reform'd* and *amended* by it, this Change of my *Mind* will have no influence on my *Nature*, it will never correct its *disorderly* Affections, nor subdue its *wild* and *extravagant* Inclinations ; but leave it altogether as *vicious* and *degenerate* as it found it. Neither will it have any good Influence upon *others*, because it doth not appear to them in any *visible* Effects. So that it is only by bringing forth its natural *Fruits* that our *Repentance* or *Change of Mind* serves the Ends of Gods *Punishments*, and 'tis unreasonable to expect that God should *accept* of our *Repentance* for our *Punishment*, when it doth not at all serve the *purpose* of our *Punishment*. For this would be to *defeat* himself, to *countermine* and *baffle* his own Intentions, and fondly to give up his *wise* and *good* Ends to the *Obstinacy* and *Perverseness* of his Creatures.

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You would fain have God *dispen*ce with your *Punishment*; well, but you ought to consider that there are very *wise* and *good* Ends that he drives at in *Punishing* you. Would you have him *give up* these Ends? that is *unreasonable*, that is to desire him to acknowledge that his Ends are not *worth* aiming at. Why what is to be done then? I will tell you what, you must give him his Ends by your *Repentance*, that is, by bringing forth *such* Fruits of *Repentance* as will effectually amend *you*, and contribute to amend *others*, and then you may be secure that God will be *satisfied*; but if not, be assured he will *prosecute* his Ends by your *Punishment*, and take care to warn *others* by the sad *example* of your *Sufferings*, since you would not take care to warn them by the good *example* of your *Actions*.

2. That we should bring forth the meet *Fruits* of *Repentance* is also necessary to the *Satisfaction* of our *Consciences*; for without such *Fruits* a Man can never be rationally satisfied that his *Repentance* is *real* and *sincere*, for if we have made any Observation on *our selves*, we cannot but be sensible of our own *Fickleness* and *Mutability*, how many *Sorts* of Men we are under our several *Circumstances*, how our *Mind* veers about upon every change of Wind, and into what *contrary* Tempers it is moulded upon contri-

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Chances and Contingencies. And having such an abundant Experience of our own *Inconsistency*, how can we rationally conclude upon every *Variation* of Temper, That this or that is our *fixt* Judgment or our *standing* Resolution ; that the Mind we are *now* in will not Change upon the next Change of our *Circumstances*, and that when *contrary* Accidents occur we shall not take up *contrary* Resolutions ; especially when our *Resolutions* do oppose our *Inclinations*, and our *Inclinations* are perpetually importuned and solicited by outward *Objects* and *Temptations* ; which is our Case in the matter of *Repentance*. In this case for Men to conclude from the *present* Bent and Inclination of their *Wills* that they are steadily *fix'd* and *determined* to good Resolutions is a piece of very unreasonable *Self-Assurance* ; for when they know themselves to be so *fickle* and *inconstant* in matters to which their Inclinations are more *indifferent*, how much reason have they to suspect the Firmness of *those* Resolutions to which their Inclinations are so extremely *averse*, and from which so many outward *Objects* are continually beckoning and inviting them ? in this case therefore we have no other way to be rationally satisfied of the *Firmness* and *Stability* of the change of our Mind but only by the *Fruits* and *Effects* of it, for, if when it hath Opportunity, it

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doth not pass forth into *Action*, and display it self upon our Lives in an answerable *Practice*, if it doth not ordinarily *restrain* us from those *Evils* it condemns and resolves against, and *spurs* us on to those *good* things it approves and consents to, it is most certain it is a mere *Cheat* and *Imposture*. For let Men say what they please, it is *impossible* that any Man should live in those *vicious* Courses which they absolutely *condemn* and are sincerely *resolved* against; they may now and then *quarrel* at their sins and take *Pet* against them upon some little *Disappointment* or unhandsome *Accident*, and in the Heat of their *Distaste* they may *condemn* and *renounce* them, but if when their *Passion* is allayed, they *repent* and *return* to them again, it is plain that their *Minds* were never changed, and that the *Current* of their *Judgment* and *Will* was only interrupted by a contrary *Gust*; but that it was never diverted into a *contrary* Channel. So that what our *Saviour* asserts of Men is as true of their *Repentance*, the *Tree* is known by its *Fruits*; if our *Repentance* be *genuine*, it will bring forth the *Fruit* of *Reformation*, but if it be *barren* or bring forth nothing but *Leaves* and good *Words* and *Professions*, it is certainly *Spurious* and *Hypocritical*. However therefore Men may juggle with and impose upon their *Consciences* with false *Shews* and *Semblances*, they can never

never hope to be rationally *satisfied* of the *Truth* of their Repentance till the natural *Fruits* and *Effects* of it appear in their *Lives* and *Conversations*.

3. That we should bring forth these meer *Fruits* of Repentance, is also necessary to satisfy the *Obligation* of *Repentance*: for *Repentance* is not required of us meerly for its *own* sake, but in order to the *Fruits* and *Effects* of it; and the Reason why God obliges us to this *Change* of our *Mind*, is, because it is a necessary *Introduction* to a thorough *Change* and *Reformation* of our *Manners*; and for a Man to condemn Sin in his Judgment meerly to *condemn* it, and resolve against it in his *Will* meerly to *resolve* against it, is so far from being a *Vertue*, that it is a ridiculous *Impertinence*. And if we still *practise* what we *condemn*, and *do* what we *resolve* against, we are so far from answering the *Obligation* of *Repentance*, that we do but *increase* and *aggravate* our *Impenitence*. For he that *doth* what he *condemns* sins against his *Knowledge* and flies in the face of his own *Convictions*, and he that *doth* what he *resolves* against, sins against his *Promise*, and basely *falsifies* his own Engagements. So that the meer *Change* of our *Mind*, you see, *abstractedly* considered, doth by no means answer the *Obligation* to *Repentance*, because the *Obligation* doth not terminate in it *self*,
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but is made with respect to the *natural Effects* of such a Change; and because this Change in it *self* is of no farther Use and Significaney in *Religion* than as it is pregnant with and productive of those *Effects*. For either the *Sin* which I condemn in my *Judgment* is such an *Evil* as I ought to *shun* and *avoid*, or it is not; if it be not, it is no *Vertue* for me to *condemn* that for an *Evil* which I need not take care to avoid; if it be, it is a *Folly* to *condemn* it, unless I also *avoid* it. And so again, either the *Duty* I consent to and resolve upon in my *Will* is necessary to be done, or it is not; if it be not, it is unnecessary for me to *resolve* to do it; if it be, it is in vain to *resolve* to do it unless I *perform* my Resolution. For as a *Cypher* which is only in order to a *Number* signifies nothing, unless a *Number* be added to it; so *Resolution*, which is only in order to *Action*, is perfectly insignificant, unless it be seconded with *Action*. And since it is nothing but the *Necessity* of *doing* what we resolve that can make it necessary for us to *resolve* to do it, we must either deny the *Necessity* even of our *resolving* to amend, or acknowledge the *Necessity* of our *actual Amendment*. So that that *inward Change* of our *Mind* which *Repentance* imports being required only in order to the *outward Change* of our *Manners*, it is impossible we should satisfy the

the Obligation of *Repentance* without bringing forth the *Fruits* of actual Amendment.

4. And lastly; That we should bring forth these *meet Fruits* of Repentance is also necessary to *accomplish* the great Work and Design of *Repentance*, which is to repair the *Decays* and *Ruins* of our Nature, and recover it from the *Diseases* it hath contracted by sinful Courses to a State of *Health* and *Perfection*. For *Repentances* suppose a *degeneracy* of our Nature, and the great Business and Design of it is to *raise* and *recover* us. And hence the *Prodigals* Repentance is called *coming to himself* Luke xv. 17. implying that before he was gone from himself, that he had abandoned his Reason by which he was constituted a *Man*, forsaken the *Guide* and leading *Principle* of his Nature, and was degenerated either into a *Beast* or a *Devil*, which is a very proper Description of the State of *Sinners*, who when they depart from God do depart from *themselves*, and run out of *Humanity* into *Bestiality* or *Devilishness*. For they do not govern themselves by *Reason* as Men should do, but by their *Passions* and *Appetites* as *Beasts* and *Devils* do; they turn a deaf Ear to the voice of their *Reason* and *Conscience*, and constantly chuse and refuse what their own black *Passions* or brutish *Appetites* direct them, and in the whole course of their Lives do act like up-
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right *Beasts* or incarnate *Devils*. The proper business therefore of *Repentance* is to bring back these *Vagrants* to themselves, and restore them to their *Wits* and *Reason*, to rescue them out of the hands of *Passion* and *Appetite*, and put them under the Power of *Reason* and *Conscience*, that so for the future they may live like themselves and as becomes *rational Beings* that are related to God and one another. This is the proper work of *Repentance*, which it can never effect without it bring forth its natural *Fruits*. For he that so repents of his *evil Courses*, as not to *correct* and *reform* them, how is it possible he should ever be the *better* for it, when he moves not a step forward from the *corrupt* and *degenerate* State of his nature, but only dances round in a Circle, and *sins* and *repents*, and *repents* and *sins*, and at last still *returns* to the same point. The only way to reform our *Nature* and *subject* its *Passions* and *Appetites* to its *Reason*, is to live *well*, and regulate our *Actions* by the *Laws* of *Reason* and *Righteousness*; by this we shall by degrees *tame* and *reduce* our irregular *Inclinations*, and *readvance* our *Reason* to its native *Throne* and *Dominion*: by forcing our selves, as we must do at first, to the *practice* of *Vertue* and *Religion*, we shall by degrees acquire *vertuous Dispositions*, and those will improve into *vertuous Habits*, and those in

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the End will grow to *Perfection*. But if we only *condemn* our Sins and *resolve* against them, but do not actually *renounce* and *for-
sake* them; instead of *bettering* our Nature we shall more and more *debauch* and *deprave* it, and be still *declining* from bad to worse, and from worse to worse, till at last our Disease becomes *desperate* and *incurable*. So that it is indispensibly necessary, you see, that we should bring forth *Fruits meet for Repentance*, because, unless we do, it is impossible our *Repentance* should ever *accomplish* the work it is designed for; that it should *heal* and *reform* our nature, *extinguish* its *vicious Inclinations*, and *adorn* it with those *Graces* wherein its *Beauty* and *Perfection* consists: and we were every whit as good *not* to repent at *all*, as to repent so as to be never the *better* for it. And now give me leave to conclude this Argument with a few Inferences.

1. From hence I infer what a *ridiculous* thing it is for Men to make a fond *Pretence* of zeal for *Religion*, while the direct *Contraries* to all the natural *Fruits* of *Repentance* do most visibly appear in their *Lives* and *Conversations*. I confess of all the offices that belong to a *Preacher*, I am naturally the most *averse* to that of *Reprehension*. I do not love to expose Mens *Faults*, and rake in their filthy *Dunghils*; and 'tis not only my *Charity*

to *Mankind* but also the Indisposition of my Nature to find fault, that makes me so heartily wish, *O would to God that Men were once so good as to need no Reprehension!* that so we might have nothing to do but to praise and encourage them, to excite them to go on with the Comforts of Religion and the just Applauses and *Encomiums* of their *Vertues*. But alas we live in an *Age* that would make a Stone to speak, and force any Man of any *Conscience*, in despite of all the *Candor* and *Modesty* of his nature, to cry aloud against the fulsome *Hypocrisies* and *Impostures* that look through our most glorious Pretences to Religion. For, for God's sake Sirs, is it not a Shame, a burning Shame to hear a Company of professed *Atheists* and notorious *Knaves* set up for *Zealots* and *Reformers*, and raise a Clamour for *Liberty* of *Conscience*, and *pure Ordinances*? as for the *sober* and *pious Dissenters*, I can bear their mistakes with as much *Tenderness* and *Compassion* as any Man, and can make them as large *Allowances* as I could reasonably desire for my *self*, if I were in their Condition. But when I see Men rank themselves under the *Banners* of Religion, that live in open *Hostility* to its Commands and Precepts, that make no Conscience of *blaspheming* the Name of God, traducing his *Vicegerents* and *Representatives*, defaming and defrauding their *Neighbours*, and exposing

the most *Sacred* and *Serious* things to *Scorn* and *Derision*? I cannot but suspect that there is *Mischief* behind the *Curtain*, what zealous *Appearances* soever they may make upon the *Stage*. For it can never enter into my *Head*, and I wonder how it should into any *Bodies* else, that those Men should ever design well to *Religion*, whose *Principles* and *Practices* are so openly *irreligious*. They may pretend *Religion*, for that is so *venerable* a Name that 'twill serve to set a *fair Colour* upon the ugliest intentions; but tho' we may be deceived by a well disguised *Hypocrisy*, yet sure we can never believe that *Profaneness* is in earnest, when it pretends to be zealous for *Religion* and a through *Reformation*. O would to God that men would at last be so honest as to *appear* what they *are*, or at least not be so *ridiculous*, as to pretend the quite *contrary* to what they *appear*! it would make any honest heart bleed to see how *Religion*, how the *Protestant Religion* is rendred cheap and vile by the *impudent Pretences* which bad Men make to it; Men whose *Lives* are bad enough to disgrace *Popery* it self, and who are *Protestants* only because they are not *Papists*. In the name of God, Sirs, what have you to do with any *Religion*, and much more with the *Protestant*, which by its *pure* and *honest* *Principles* defies and renounces you, which *dominates* your designs and dis-

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avows your Actions, and blushes to see how you Profane and Scandalize it by pretending Friendship to and Familiarity with it. For what will Strangers think of it, that understand not its Principles, when they hear such as you claim such an intimate Acquaintance with it? how prone will they be to suspect that 'tis a Religion for your tooth, and that it shelters and patronizes you in all your Wickedness? wherefore for God's sake be at length so just to the Reputation of that Religion you pretend so much zeal for, as either to bring forth the Fruits of it by living up to its Principles, or not concern your selves any farther about it. For this I am sure of, while such as you pretend to it, it loses much more by the Disgrace which your Lives do cast upon it, than ever it is like to gain by your Zeal and your Clamour for it.

2. Hence I also infer how extreamly insufficient that Repentance is, which the Church of Rome doth frankly approve and allow of; which is such as plainly evacuates and supercedes the Necessity of bringing forth the natural Fruits of Repentance; as any one may easily apprehend that will but take the pains impartially to consider the Chain of that Churches Principles. For first the Council of Trent teaches that *Attrition*, which is nothing but a Sorrow for Sin proceeding from the

Fear of Punishments, doth dispose Men to receive *Grace* in the *Sacrament of Penance*, and that all the *Sacraments* of the *Gospel*, of which *Penance* is one, do actually confer grace upon those that are disposed for it. So that if he hath but the *Grace* to be afraid of *Hell* and to be sorry that he is in *Danger* of it, it is but *confessing* his Sins to a *Priest* and undergoing a short trifling *Penance*, and upon a few words of *Absolution* he shall presently be dubbed a true *Penitent*, and be as effectually intiated in the *Favour* of God as if he had brought forth all the *Fruits* of *Repentance*. And this *Bellarmino* tells us is the current judgment of all their *Divines*; which if it be true, poor *Judas* had very ill luck to be damned; for according to *this Doctrine* he was thoroughly disposed for *Justification*, it being out of mere *Attrition* that he hanged himself; so that had he had but a *Priest* to have administered *Penance* and *Absolution* to him, that *Grace* that made him hang himself, would have intitled him to *Heaven*. 'Tis true indeed they tell us that there is a certain *Penance* which Men must undergo for their sins in *this Life* and that if they should not *perform* what is imposed upon them, or if what is imposed should not be *sufficient* to satisfy Gods Justice, they must be forced to *make it up* by their Sufferings in *Purgatory*. But even against *this* too that
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Church hath contrived an excellent Remedy, and that is the *Treasury* of the superabundant *Merits* of *Christ* and the *Saints*, of which at very reasonable Rates Men may purchase such a share, as will immediately pay off all their *Purgatory* scores, how great soever their present *Sins*, and how small soever their present *Penances* are. For out of this *Treasury* of *Merit* you may have *Indulgence* for a Hundred, a Thousand, or a Hundred Thousand Years; and if this will not satisfy, you may besides this have full *Indulgence*, fuller *indulgence* and fullest *Indulgence*, and 'tis impossible you should ever want *Merit* to keep your *Soul* out of *Purgatory*, if you have but *Money* and *Hearts* to pay for it. But if you should still be doubtful, you may secure all, if you please, by listing your self into an holy *Confraternity*; for if you will but turn *Brother* of *St. Francis* his *Cord*, you shall presently be intitled to such a stock of *Indulgencies* as all the *Sins* you can commit will never be able to out-spend. For at your first putting on this sacred *Implemēt*, you have as full and as effectual Pardon as was ever vouchsafed in the *Sacrament* of *Baptism*. And afterwards should you fall into mortal Sin, 'tis but taking so much Pains as to walk after the monthly *Procession*, and you shall have a plenary *Indulgence* which shall attend your holy *Cord* to the very Ar-

ticle of your *Death*, Besides which, you shall have your share in all the superabundant *Merits* of the *Saints*, of the *Order* of *Saint Roses*, and *Saint Clara's*, and *Saint Francis himself*, who by preaching to *Beasts* and teaching *Larks* and *Swallows* their *Catechism*, and silly *sheep* to bleat out their *Canonical Hours*, with sundry other such like holy *Feats*, could not fail to treasure up a vatt stock of *Merits* in the common *Bank* of his *Fraternity*. Or if you would be surer yet, you may enter yourself a *Brother* of the holy *Fraternity* of the 150 Beads of *St. Dominick*, where, for saying over 150 *Ave Maries* and 15 *Pater Nosters* in a week, you shall not only be allowed your *Dividend* of the superabundant *Merits* of all the *Saints* from *Adam*, and as many *Indulgencies* as you can possibly have occasion for your *self*; but such an overplus as will be sufficient to redeem 115 *Souls* yearly out of *Purgatory*. And it would be a very hard case if with all this *tackle* you should go to *Purgatory* your *self*. But if the worst come to the worst, it is but inrolling your *self* a *Brother* of *St. Simons Scapular*, and then if you should go to *Purgatory*, the *Virgin Mary* hath engaged her *self*, if *Pope John XXII.* doth not truly bely her, to come down to *Purgatory* every *Saturday* night, and pull up every *Soul* thence that hath worn this sacred *Vestment* into the
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holy hill of eternal Life. And when a *Fryer's Cord*, or *Rochet*, or *String of Beads* are such excellent *tools* for Men to *work out* their *Salvation* with, what need they trouble themselves to bring forth the *Fruits of Repentance*? had these things been only the *Conceits* of some *particular* Members of that *Church* I should not have mentioned them in this place, because to us they cannot but look extremely *ridiculous*; but alas they are *Chats* that have been founded and established on the *Bulls* of their *Popes*, avowed and contended for by their gravest *Doctors*, and revered and believed by the *devoutest* Members of their *Communion*. And how can they be obliged to bring forth the *Fruits of Repentance*, who are furnished with so many pretty *Devices* to get to *Heaven* without them?

3. And lastly, Hence therefore let us all be persuaded *heartily* to comply with this *Injunction*, and bring forth the natural *Fruits of Repentance*; first to form a *heartly* and *deliberate Resolution* against our Sins, and then to put it into *Execution* by forsaking all *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts*, and living *soberly* and *righteously* and *godly* in this present World. I do not deny but in this undertaking there are many times very great *Difficulties*, especially when we first enter upon it, when after a long *Course of Folly*

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we *begin* to reform; for *then* we must *wrestle* against our own Inclinations and *struggle* with inveterate Habits; and this perhaps will put us to a greater trial of our *Courage* and *Constancy* than we are now aware of. But if upon a due consideration of the Arguments on both sides we can but once persuade our selves to a through *Resolution* of *Amendment*, in all probability we have broke the *heart* of the *main* Difficulty of *Repentance*. It is I confess a *hard* thing for a Man to persuade himself against all his *Habits* and *Inclinations*, to resolve without any reserve in *Cold* and *Deliberate* thoughts upon an universal *Reformation*, at once to resolve to bid *adieu* for ever to all his *darling* Lusts and their appendant *Pleasures*. This, as our *Saviour* describes it, is like the *cutting off* of a *right Hand* and the *plucking out* of a *right Eye*; and therefore must doubtless be attended with vehement *Struglings* and *Reluctances*; but when this is done, the *sharpest* *Pang* of our *Repentance* is over; and if *now* we do not *wilfully* miscarry, these our bitter *Throws* like the *Virgin Mother's*, will soon conclude in *Songs* and *Magnificats*. For by arming a *firm* *Resolution* against them, we have already broken the *main* strength of our *Lusts*, so that now we have nothing to do but to *pursue* our *Victory*; and if we have but the *Courage* to keep the ground we have *gotten*, and to stand

stand firm to our *Resolution* that so our conquered *Foe* may not be able to rally and reinforce himself against us; we shall soon be crowned with the Joys of a *Victory* that will lead us into an *everlasting Triumph*. For our evil *Habits*, being for a while kept under a constant and severe *Restraint*, will by degrees decay and languish, and at last expire; and then the Trouble of *contending* will be over, and all our consequent *Religion* will be Sweet, and Natural, and Easy; and we shall reap far more *Pleasure* and *Delight* from it than ever we did from the most jolly Course of *Sinning*. For besides that a *Religious* Life is in its self more agreeable to our *rational Faculties*, and consequently more grateful unto *Human Nature*, whose noblest *Pleasures* do result from the exercise of her highest *Faculties*, and whose highest *Faculties* are never so vigorously exercised as within the sphere of a *Religious Life*: Besides which I say we shall therein find an unspeakable Satisfaction of *Mind*, and such a Calm of *Conscience*, and such ravishing Joys and *Delights* springing out of our sense of the Love of God and our hopes of a blessed *Immortality* hereafter, as will abundantly compensate all our *Labours* past, and render them not only tolerable but delightful. For how can I think any Pains intolerable, the Endurance whereof will create a constant Harmony within me,

will

will Crown me with the *Applause* of my own Mind, will indear me to the *Fountain* of all Love and Goodness, and entertain me with the Hopes of being as *happy* after a few moments as all the Joys of an *everlasting Heaven* can make me? But I beseech you to consider, is it not much easier to indure the *Agonies* of a bitter *Repentance*, than the horrid *Despair* of a *damned Ghost*? to thwart a foolish and unreasonable *Lust*, than to roar forever upon the Rack of a self-condemning *Conscience*? if it be so *grievous* to us to contend with an evil *habit* and struggle a while with a stiff and obstinate *Inclination*, to resolve and strive and watch and pray against them, Lord, how *grievous* will it be to dwell with *everlasting Burnings*, and to endure the dire Effects of thy unquenchable *Fury* forever? and yet one of these must certainly be endured, for between them there is no *medium*. Wherefore seeing we are under such an *absolute* Necessity of enduring *Hell* or the Difficulties of *Repentance*, in the Name of God let us but *act like Men*, and of the two chuse that which is most *tolerable*, and then I am sure we shall follow the counsel of the Text, and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*.

MATTH.

MATTHEW XXV. 10. last part.

And the Door was shut.

THESE Words are the close of the *Parable* of the *ten-Virgins*, whom our *Saviour* distributes into five *Wise* and five *Foolish*, and by them he represents the *different* Carriage and Fate of Men both *good* and *bad*. For the better understanding of which *Parable* you must know that our *Saviour* borrowed this, as well as sundry others, from the *Jewish Doctors*, of which our learned *Sheringham* in his Preface of his Translation of the *Joma* hath given us sundry Instances; of which this is one, which to this purpose he transcribes out of the *Gemara Babylonica*; *Rab. Eliezer said, be sure thou repent the day before thou diest.* Upon which his *Disciples* asked him whether a *Man* might know that hour of his death; whereunto he answers, *let a Man therefore repent every day, because he knows not when he shall die.* Upon which *Rab. Jochanan* proposes this *Parable*; a certain rich *Man* prepared a *Marriage Feast*, to which he called his *Servants*, but did not tell them the distinct time when this *Feast* should be: of these *Servants* some were *wise*,
and

and some *foolish*; the *wise* cloathed themselves splendidly, and sitting before their Masters house thus thought with themselves, all things are here prepared, and nothing is wanting; wherefore since we are *uncertain* what hour we shall be called, we will *wait*, that so whensoever he calls us, we may be ready to atend. But the *foolish* sleepy Servants loitered away their time, concluding thus with themselves; we need not be *over-hasty* in making our selves *ready* it being yet a great while before we are like to be called. But on a suddain the *Master* calls them all to the *Supper*; upon which the *Wise* appeared before him *ready* to attend, but the *Foolish* being *unready* would fain have gone away to *dress* themselves; but the *King* rejoycing for those who were *ready*, and being very angry with those that *slept*, said, you who are *ready* shall sit down, and Eat and Drink and Rejoyce; whilst you that *slept* shall be shut out of Door; for so saith the *Lord*, behold my *Servants* shall eat, but *you* shall hunger, my *Servants* shall drink, but *you* shall thirst. This is the *Jewish Parable*, which for substance being so exactly agreeable with our *Saviours*, we may very reasonably conclude that his was only a *Copy* of that *Original*; and since the *Design* of it is evidently to shew the Danger of *delaying* Repentance to the last, we may fairly suppose

pose the *Design* of our *Saviour* to be so too. For by the *Wise* and *Foolish* Virgins here, our *Saviour* plainly means *good* and *bad* Christians, and by the *Marriage feast*, that state of *Happiness* which he hath prepared for the *good*. By their going forth to meet the *Bridegroom* is meant their expectation of *Christs Coming*, either to their *particular*, or to the *general* Judgment. By their *Lamps* in their hands *Expositors* generally understand their *visible* profession of *Christianity*. By the *Oil* that made those *Lamps* to shine, is meant *Charity* and *good Works*, which are the *Fruits* of a *sincere* Repentance, and the glory and lustre of our *Christian* Profession. And as for the *Wise* who by *sincere* Repentance had prepared themselves for this *feast* of heavenly *Happiness*, they are admitted into it; but as for the *Foolish* that had put off all to the last, though they bestir'd themselves very vigorously in this *sad* Extremity, yet all was to no purpose; for when they came to ask admittance into *Heaven*, the Door was shut against them, and they are dismissed with this bitter *farewel*, *Verily I say unto you, I know you not*. So that the *Design* of the *Words* is plainly to represent the *sad Catastrophe* of a *late* Repentance, which tho' it may be very active and vigorous when things are reduced to the *last* extremity, yet proves most commonly ineffectual.

al, and finds the *Door of Heaven* shut against it.

That therefore which I design from these Words is this, to explain and state what is the effect of a *Death-bed* Repentance, by which I mean such a *Repentance* as after a long Course of *Wickedness* begins upon the very near and sensible Approach, either of a *natural* or *violent* Death, such as is put off till Death is at the Door, and Men perceive themselves to be departing hence, and going away into *Eternity*. For as for that Repentance which is begun in *Health*, when Death is not in View, and Men are in the midst of *Temptations* to the contrary, it is much more free and ingenuous than that of a *Death-bed* can be supposed; and consequently though it should be stopped in its progress by a *sudden* unexpected Death, yet there is much more hope of it: and that which begins also in a *long lingering Sickness*, though it be not so free as the former, and therefore not so hopeful, yet is there much more hope of it than of that which begins in more *acute* Diseases, to which Death more suddenly follows; because it hath much more time to grow in, and to finish and compleat it self by. That *late* or *Death-bed* Repentance therefore concerning which we are now inquiring, must be such a Repentance as begins in the prospect of a *near-approaching*

approaching Death, and to which that Death doth very suddenly follow. Concerning which I shall enquire these three things.

1. How far it is possible for such a Repentance to be *effectual*.

2. How extremely *hazardous* it is whether it ever *actually* prove *effectual* to our *Happiness* or no.

3. If it should prove so, yet how impossible it is in an *ordinary* way for us to attain any comfortable *Assurance* of it.

1. How far it is possible for such a Repentance to be *effectual*. And here I dare not pronounce it to be *absolutely* and *universally* Ineffectual, though I confess I am horribly afraid that it very rarely proves otherwise. For the Repentance on which *Salvation* is entailed necessarily includes a through *Change* of *Soul*, that is, a *new* prevailing *Judgment* and *Resolution*; and for certain wheresoever this really is there is *true* Repentance. For the very *Life* of Repentance consists in the universal *Subjection* of our *Souls* to God, and this *Subjection* consists in such a firm *Resolution* of *Soul* to obey him, as, whensoever occasion is offered, will render us *actually* obedient. I know there are some who place this *Subjection* of our *Souls* to God in an universal *Habit* of *Obedience*, but surely they do not consider that an *Habit* of *Obedience*, which consists in an *inherent* *Ap-
nens*

ness and Faculty of obeying, is not attainable under a long progress in *Religion*, and that in our first Entrance into the *Religious State* we are so far from being *habituated* to obey God, that we generally obey with a great deal of *Difficulty*; and while we do so, 'tis a Contradiction to say that we are *habituated* to Obedience. So that by placing the *Souls* Subjection to God in such a *Habit*, we undermine the comfort of all *Beginners* in *Religion*, and exclude all those from being faithful *Servants* who have not conquered the *Difficulties* of obeying. And therefore I think it much more safe to place our first *Subjection* to God in a *heartly* Resolution of obeying; for as *Choice* and *Resolution* is the principle of all our *voluntary* Actions, so it is of our *Subjection* to God; which being a *moral* Action must be voluntary, and so begin in *Choice* or *Resolution*, from whence if it hath opportunity it will proceed into *Action*, and that being often repeated will gradually improve into an *Habit*, and so in time render it *natural* and *easy* to us. But if Death should intervene and deprive the Man who is thus sincerely *resolved* on all opportunities of *Actual* Obedience, that being accidental makes no change in his *main* State, the *Frame* and *Temper* of his *Soul* remains the same, it goes into *Eternity* a faithful *Subject* to God, and had it continued longer
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here would have expressed its *Subjection* in all the necessary Acts of *Homage* and *Obedience*. And far be it from us to imagine the condition of such a *Soul* to be desperate, for though it is true that a *holy* Life is the indispensable Condition of *Salvation*, yet it is also true that a *holy* Life is necessarily included in this *Subjection* of our *Souls* to God. That Man doth live a *holy* Life who sincerely submits his *Soul* to God, and is firmly resolved, as occasion offers, to express his *submission* in all the *external* Acts of *Homage* and *Obedience*. 'Tis true the *Death-bed* Penitent hath not opportunity to exercise himself in all the parts of *Obedience*; he cannot practise *Chastity* and *Temperance*, nor any other *Vertue*, to whose contrary *Vice* his *Sickness* hath utterly disabled him; but what of that? neither hath the *healthful* Penitent always opportunity to practise every *Vertue* which God enjoins: if he be *poor* or *single*, he can no more give *Alms*, or provide for his *Children*, than the *sick* Man can be *Chaste* or *Temperate*, and yet he lives a *holy* Life, I hope, though he hath no occasion or opportunity to practise either of these Duties. Why then may not the *sick* penitent that practises his *Duty* so far as he hath opportunity, that heartily mourns for his *sin*, and patiently submits to Gods correction, that practises *Humility* and *Devotion*, is *charitable*

in forgiving Offences, *just* in making *Restitution* for Injuries; why may not such a one be as well said to live a *holy* Life, when he doth all this out of a hearty *Subjection* of his *Soul* to God, though he should have no opportunity to practise some other *Vertues*. For he who is sincerely resolved to submit to the *Laws* of *Temperance* and *Chastity*, is chaste and temperate though he never have opportunity to practise them, and all the difference between him and one that lives to practise what he resolves is only this, that the *latter* will practise it, and the *former* would; and in Gods account, who sees the *Issues* of all our *Resolutions*, he is as really *temperate* who would be so if he had opportunity, as he who is so when he hath: so that though *his* Repentance be not strictly the same with the *others*, yet it being to the same purpose, we cannot imagine that the good God will *damn* him only for a *punctilio*. If therefore it be possible for the *Death-bed* Penitent to reduce himself to a firm, prevailing *Resolution* of obeying God, I see no reason to conclude his *Condition* to be *absolutely* desperate; for being so resolved, he is a holy Man, though very imperfectly I confess; and if he go into *Eternity* with that *Resolution* with him, that will dispose him for some degree of *Happiness*. For if his *Resolution* be such as would have prevail-

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ed if he had continued in *this* Life, it will as well prevail in the *other*; and if it so prevail there as to render him actually obedient, it will by necessary consequence render him in some measure a *happy and blessed Spirit*; Obedience to God being as natural a Cause of *Happiness*, as the *Sun* is of *Light*, or the *Fire* of *Heat and Burning*. All the Difficulty therefore is this, not whether God will accept of such a *Resolution*, as whether a *Death-bed* Repentance can be so far improved as to rise to such a *Resolution*. And here I must needs confess, and shall hereafter make it evident, that the Difficulty of perfecting such a Repentance into such a Resolution is so exceeding great, that it is the greatest *madness* in the World for any Man to promise himself *success* before hand whilst he is in *Health*, and hath so many better opportunities of Repentance in his hand. But that it is absolutely impossible I dare not say for these following Reasons:

1. Because *de facto* we sometimes find that the *Resolutions* of a *sick Bed* have proved effectual. We know there have been some Men who in a *Fit* of *Sickness* when they have looked on themselves as *abandoned* of all Hopes, have yet betaken themselves to *serious* Resolutions, which when they have recovered to their former *Health*, have visibly proved effectual. I confess these *Sick-*

bed Resolutions do most commonly *die* when the Man recovers, and he usually leaves his *Bed* and his *good* purposes together: but since there are some Instances wherein they have held and proved effectual, that is sufficient to *demonstrate* the Possibility of the Thing: for what hath been, may be; and what reason can be given why *some* Men may not perform in *Eternity* what they promised on their *Death-beds*, as well as *others* do after their Recovery what they promised on their *Sick-beds*? As therefore the *Relapse* of most Men from their *Sick bed* purposes proves it extremely hard, so the continuance of others stedfast to them proves it possible for such Purposes to be sincere.

2. Another thing that proves it possible is this, that upon a *Death-bed* oft times the *Arguments* of *Repentance* have a more immediate Access to the *Minds* of Men than at any other time, and consequently may be well supposed to be much more effectual and operative. Now the *Promises* and *Threats* of *Religion* will strike more immediately on the *Soul*, the *Goods* and *Evils* which they propose and denounce being nearer at hand, and the *Soul* perceiving her self within a *moment* of enjoying the one or suffering the other for ever; and that thick Fog of *earthly* Cares and Pleasures that interrupted her Prospect into the *other* World being in a

great

great measure dispelled and scattered, she lies more open and uncovered to the Things of *Eternity*: and therefore as one thing strikes upon another with a *natural Effect*, as *Light* strikes upon the *Eye*, and *Sounds* upon the *Ear*; so *eternal* Things do upon *immortal* Spirits when there is nothing between to intercept the Stroke, and make most deep and vigorous Impressions on them. And when *Heaven* and *Hell* are so near the *Soul* that she expects almost every *moment* to expire into the *one* or the *other*, who can tell what strange and sudden Alterations they may make in her *Temper* and *Resolutions*; So that though I must confess it is a *stupendous Effect* for a *Soul* to be changed in the short *Twinkling* of a *Death bed* Repentance, yet when I consider the mighty *Influence* which the arguments of *Religion* may then be reasonably supposed to have upon her, I dare not say 'tis *absolutely* impossible; especially considering,

3. And lastly, That how impossible soever it may be to *humane* Power, yet 'tis not impossible to the *Grace* of God. 'Tis true indeed, God ordinarily vouchsafes his Grace to Men proportionably to their improvement of it; and I confess if he proceeds by this Rule with the *dying* Penitent, he hath less Reason to expect God's Grace now than in any former *Period* of his Life. But yet

we see the Grace of God doth not always proceed by *stated* Rules and Proportions, for sometimes God hath given the *largest* Measures of his Grace to those who have made the *least* Improvements of it: sometimes very *great* Sinners have been stopped in their *wicked* Courses when they least expected it, and turned back by a Grace that was almost *irresistible*; and tho' this be more ordinary than other Miracles are, so that Men may as reasonably *immure* themselves, and depend upon God to feed them by Miracle, as *put* off their Repentance to the last in expectation of having their *Souls* renewed and changed by such a miraculous Grace; yet who knows but when the poor *dying* Penitent, under the mighty *Hopes* and *Fears* of *Eternity*, is struggling might and main for his *Soul*, to rescue it from *endless* Misery; who knows, I say, but the *good* God may sometimes, and in some *peculiar* Cases, take pity upon him, and by a more than ordinary Grace concur with his *Endeavours*, and render them successful. 'Tis, I confess, a *sad* State when things are brought to this Extremity that he has nothing but *this* to depend on; but yet since the Grace of God is not confined to do *thus* or *thus*, and no otherwise; but may, when it pleases, transgress the ordinary *Methods* of its Procedure, I dare not pronounce the State of those

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Death-bed penitents wholly *desperate*, who heartily implore the *divine* Assistance, and exert their utmost Strength, and use all means within their Power to *change* the *wicked* Temper of their Minds. For God may hear and pity them if he please, and if he will, there is no doubt but his own Grace *concurring* with their Endeavours can produce this *happy* Effect how great and difficult soever it may be. All that can be said therefore in the Case is this, that an *internal* Change of *Soul* from a State of Disobedience to a State of *universal* Subjection to God, is *indispensibly* necessary to *Salvation*; that such a *Change* is possible to the *Death-bed* Penitent, and so consequently is the *Salvation* which depends upon it. But alas, 'tis *barely* possible, *so* barely possible, that while I am in my Wits I think I should hardly venture on it for a *thousand* Worlds. Which brings me to

2. The next Thing proposed, which was to shew you how fearfully *hazardous* it is, whether a Man that *begins* his Religion on his *Death-bed* can actually arrive to that degree of *Repentance* as is necessary to his *future* Happiness. And this will plainly appear if we consider,

1. The great *Difficulty* of the thing it self.

2. The *Impotency* and *Indisposition* of him that is to perform it.

3. The

3. The *little* Reason he hath to expect any extraordinary *Aid* and *Assistance* from God.

1. It is extremely *hazardous*, because of the great *Difficulty* of the Thing it self. We find by Experience, that after a long Course of Sin, 'tis one of the most *difficult* Things in the World for a Man to reduce himself to a *thorough* Resolution of Amendment; for Custom of sinning begets *sinful* Habits, and *sinful* Habits are a *second* Nature to us. So that for a Man to resolve upon a holy Life after he hath been long *habituated* to the contrary, is to resolve to make War with himself, and to Live in *open* Hostility with the *Inclinations* of his own nature; and thus to resolve against the *Grain*, and *incline* himself against his own Inclinations, is one of the greatest Acts of *Violence* that a Man can offer to himself. 'Tis true, in a sudden *Heat* and *Transport* it is an easie matter for a Man to resolve upon any thing when he is in a *Pet* against his *Sins*, or his Mind is *chafed* into a *religious* Temper; but, alas! these *inconsiderate* purposes are generally the greatest *Cheats* in the World, for they rarely, if ever, work any *Alteration* in the *Soul*; for though now the Man be in a *Pet* against his *Sins*, yet his Judgment of them is the same, and that is the Principle of his *standing* Resolutions. Men are often

angry

angry with their best Friends, and while the Passion continues, they can easily resolve to discard them for ever; but notwithstanding they do so, yet they are Friends still, and love them heartily, though at present they do not *perceive* it: and as soon as their Passion is over, their Love will return, and immediately *cancel* all their Resolutions against them. And so it is with these *passionate* Resolutions Men make against their Sins which work no Change at all in the standing *Temper* and *Disposition* of their Souls and are so far from curing them, that they are only the *Intermissions* of their Disease; and though at present they are *angry* with their Sins, and do purpose never to be *reconciled* to them more, yet still they love them heartily though they perceive it not, and as soon as their Passion is over, their Love returns and reverses their Purpose; and so these Fal-lings out of Lovers end in the *Renovation* of Love: so that these *rash* and *hasty* Resolutions are so far from being *heartly* Submissions unto God, that they only make a *Truce* with him to fetch Breath and *recruit* for a farther *Rebellion*. And thus to resolve, is, I confess, the easiest thing in the World; but for an *old* Sinner to enter into a *serious* Resolution of amendment in the midst of *cool* and *deliberate* Thoughts, when his Sins are about him entertaining him with the *fresh* Remem-
brances

brance of those *dear* Pleasures they were wont to invite him to; when he is or supposes himself to be *inviroll'd* with Temptation, and importuned on evere side with all those *soft* Allurements that are so sweet and grateful to him; this, doubtless, is such a Task as will exact his utmost *Industry* and *Consideration*, For now he will meet with such *Oppositions* from his Appetites, such *Shrinkings* and *Recoilings* from his Will, such *Struglings* and *Pulbacks* from his *darling* Lusts, as will even distract his *Soul*, and interpose a thousand Impediments to hinder him from coming to a *thorough* Resolution. So that unless he be *armed* with great *Consideration*, *animated* with *invincible* Courage, and *aided* by a *mighty* Grace, after all his *Deliberation* he will either not resolve at all, or, which is almost as bad, resolve with Reserves and Exceptions. Since therefore to form a *heartly* and *thorough* Resolution of Amendment is so extreamly hard and difficult, what a *fearful* Hazard must that Man run that remits it to a *dying* Hour. For how can we hope to accomplish so *great* a work in so *short* a Time? when we *croud* up a Duty of so *vast* a Bulk, in so *narrow* a Room, in how much Danger must it be of being *strangled* in the Birth for want of Time and Air to *breath* in? I dare not say it is absolutely impossible in so short a Time to make a
through

through Change in our Temper and Resolution; but sure I am it is so extreamly difficult, that 'tis the greatest *Hazard* in the World whether we actually perform it, especially considering.

2. The great *Impotency* and *Indisposition* of *Death-bed* Penitents to perform it. By what hath been said of the Difficulty of it, you plainly perceive that to the performance of it there is required *vast* Industry, *great* Consideration, and *earnest* Strivings and Contests with our selves; but alas! how unable and unfit is a Man for these things when he lies languishing on a *Death-bed*? when commonly the sickness he languishes under is either such as wholly *disables*, or extreamly *weakens* and *impairs* his Reason; so that either he is wholly incapable of such Reflections and Considerations as are necessary to a *thorough* Resolution of Amendment, or at least is very unfit for them. Now in this sad Extremity what can the *poor* Wretch do? His *sinful* Soul sits *drowzing* on the very *Brinks* of a dismal *Eternity*, and *Deaths* cold hand is thrusting it *headlong* down; so that if *She* doth not presently *rouze* and *start* up and *run* away from her Danger, within a very few *moments* she will awake in *everlasting* Flames. But alas! how should *she* *rouze* herself out of those *fatal* Slumbers when she hath scarce Reason enough to reflect upon
her

her Danger or to take any Notice of that *fearful* Precipice before her; when by the distemper of her *bodily* Organs *She* is so *stun'd* and *stupidified* that she can neither discern where *She* is, nor whither *She* is going? But suppose his Sickness be such as leaves him the free Use of his Reason, yet considering how much he must needs be distracted by *Pain* and *Uneasiness*, by *Weakness* and *Languishment*, by the *Cares* of settling his Affairs in *this* World, and the *frightful* Prospect that he hath of *another*, it will be impossible for him, without a mighty Assistance from above, to *range* his *scattered* and *unweildy* Thoughts into such *sober* Reflections and *serious* Considerations as are necessary to the forming of a *thorough* Resolution of Amendment; for such a Resolution can never be formed in a *hurry* of Passion, but must be the Result of *calm* and *composed* Deliberations. For, as I shewed you before, hasty and passionate Resolutions work no *Change* upon the Soul, and till a Man hath made a *new* Judgment of Things, it will be in vain for him to make any *new* Resolutions; because 'tis impossible that any Resolution should be lasting that is not founded in the Judgment. But what Capacity can a Man be in to make a *new* Judgment of things in the midst of the *incessant* Hurries and Distractions of a *Death-bed*, when he cannot consider

consider a quarter of an hour together, but is interrupted almost every *moment* by a thousand Accidents and Avocations? So that to refer our Repentance to a *Death-bed* is the same thing as to retire into a *Battle* to meditate, or to set up a *Closet* to study *Philosophy* in the *Head Quarters* of an Army, where a Man is as capable of free and undisturbed *Contemplations* as Men usually are of forming *thorough* Resolutions of Amendment when they are dying; which, without an *extraordinary* Assistance from God, being utterly impossible, must needs be extremely *hazardous*; considering,

3. And lastly, the little Reason such a Man hath to expect any *extraordinary* Assistance from God. When a Man hath slighted all Gods *Invitations* to Repentance, and wilfully turned a *deaf* Ear to all the *secret* Whispers and Importunities of his *blessed* Spirit, when he hath all his Life-time rejected the Motions and Tenders of his *Grace* upon this resolution that he would sin on as long as he was able, and never repent till he could sin no longer; with what confidence can he expect that God should *vouchsafe* him in his dying Hour that *extraordinary* Grace which he stands in need of, and without which he must dye *forever*? For when a Man hath been mocking God all his Life with the Promises of a *future* Repentance,

tance, but from time to time hath still delayed and deferred it till he hath driven it to the *last* Extremity, so that now he must repent or be *damned* perhaps the next *moment*; with what face can he implore such an *extraordinary* Favour from that God with whom he hath so wretchedly prevaricated? For unless we suppose God to be a Being that loves to be provoked, one that is taken with *Affronts* and *Injuries*, and consequently that measures his Favours to us by the degrees and number of our *Rebellions* against him; we cannot reasonably expect that he should be then most kind to us when we have offended him as much as we are able, and would never be persuaded to repent of our Wickedness till we are able to offend him no more. I desire to have as large Apprehensions of the *Mercy* of God as can be reasonably admitted, but withal I am assured he is the hardest to be imposed upon of any one in the World; and being so, it cannot well be expected that when in despite of his Authority and *frequent* Invitations to Repentance, the *Sinner* hath *squandred* away all his *Strength* and *Vigour* in a Course of Wickedness, God should be so indulgent to him on his *Death-bed* as to supply that Strength which he hath spent in sinning against him by the *extraordinary* Assistances of his own Grace; especially considering
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how often he hath declared his Resolution of *dispensing* his Grace to us in *greater* or *lesser* Proportions according to the improvements we make of it. So James iv. 6, 7, 8. *For the Scripture offereth more Grace; and therefore saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Submit your selves therefore unto God; resist the Devil, and he will fly from you; draw near unto God, and he will draw near unto you.* And thus more expressly in the Parable of the Talents, Mat. xxv. 29. *For unto every one that hath, that is, improves what he hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, i. e. improves not what he hath, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.* God therefore having thus declared that he will *lessen* or *augment* his Grace proportionably as we abuse or improve it, we may reasonably expect that the oftener we do repulse its Motions, the weaker will be its Attempts upon us, and so weaker and weaker till 'tis wholly withdrawn, and hath given us up for *desperate* and *irreclaimable*; and consequently if God proceed in *this* Method, as doubtless he most ordinarily doth, then the longer a Man continues in sin, the more he is *abandoned* of the Grace of God. So that when the Sinner is arrived to his *Death bed*, he may reasonably expect that if Gods Assistance be not wholly withdrawn and lessened

ed into nothing, as he may justly fear it will, yet it will be much less vigorous and powerful than in any *former Period* of his Life; and if it be, his Condition is next to desperate; for if his Soul be not *renewed and changed*, within a *few Moments* it is ruined beyond all recovery. And since to effect this *Change* is a Work of *mighty Difficulty*, what but a *mighty Grace* can enable the *dying* Penitent in so *short* a time and with so *small* a Strength to perform it? So that the Summ of all is this, though the Condition of him that *remits* his Repentance to a *Death-bed* be not absolutely *desperate*, yet 'tis so fearfully *hazardous*, that nothing on this side *Hell* can be more wretched and deplorable; and therefore for Men to put off their Repentance to the last, and venture their Souls upon so great an *Uncertainty*, is a piece of the most *desperate Folly and Madness*. I confess when a Man hath been so desperate and cruel to himself as to run himself upon this *fearful Venture*, I would by no means discourage his Repentance, but rather Use all *Means* to invite and persuade him to it: for Repentance is always the best thing we can do, and when a Man hath been so desperately *besotted* as to defer it to a *Death-bed*, and put himself upon this *woeful Extremity*, this is the *last Remedy* he can apply, and the *best Refuge* he hath to fly to. But so long

long as Men are well and in Health, and have a fair *space* of Repentance in their hands, I would not for all the World encourage them to run such a *desperate* Hazard; for next to leaping headlong into *Hell* without any Repentance at all, doubtless the most *desperate* Folly a Man can be guilty of is to defer his Repentance till he is dying. And so I pass on to

3. The Third and last thing proposed; which was, to shew you that supposing our *Death-bed* Penitent should repent effectually, yet how impossible it is for him in an *ordinary* way to attain any *comfortable* Assurance of it. And indeed considering how many *Cheats* and *Frauds* there are under most of our Resolutions of Amendment, it is at least extreamly difficult for us to be any otherwise *secure* of them than by their Effects and Performances. As for the *dying* Penitent therefore that doth not long enough *survive* his Resolution to see the Execution of it, how can he be secure that it is sincere and perfect, especially considering that the *Circumstances* in which he makes it are such as do conspire to render it extremely suspicious. For

1. He makes it under the *fear* of *Death*.
2. In the *Absence* of Temptation.
3. Under a great *agony* of Conscience.
4. In the *near* Neighbourhood of *Eternity*.

1. He makes his Resolution under a *mighty* fear of Death, which gives him great reason to suspect it. We daily see how much our Humour's change and vary upon every Remove out of *one* Condition into *another*, and how these do cast the *Ballance* of our *Superiour* Soul and make us every day so many *several sorts* of Men. Every *Wind* almost turns our Minds towards a *new* point, and like *Water* we take the form of every *Vessel* we are put into. So that we have great reason to suspect that our *Death-bed* Repentance is not so much the *Mould* of our Minds, as of the *Condition* we are put into, and that were we poured back again into an *healthful* Condition, we should immediately lose our *present* Shape, and return into our *former* Figure again. For when Men see their Life is in Gods hand, and that he is ready to cut it in funder, it is no wonder at all if they do what they can to *bribe* him to spare them a little longer; and consequently, if they resolve *well*, and make *fair* Promises of *future* Obedience; which is the best thing they can do in this Extremity. But if their Resolution be founded in the *Fear* of Death, its *Foundation* is contrary to its *Performance*, the *Motive* of their Resolution to live well for the *future* being a presumption that they shall live no *longer*; And it will be an Act of *Reason* and *Justice* to themselves to *stick* to their
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their resolution, when the *Motive* of it is changed; and on the *Contrary*, of *Imprudence* and *Unkindness*, to forsake the *Conclusion*, when the *Premises* are consulted. So that upon such grounds as these what can be expected but that this *sick* Resolver will resume his Sins with his Health if he should recover, and leave his *new* Vows in that Bed where he first took them up, and discharge his *Fears* and his good *Actions*, his *Physician* and his *Confessor* together; it being so, how is it possible he should be assured that his Resolution is *sincere* unless he recover and perform it?

2. He makes his Resolution in the *Absence* of *Temptation*, which gives him also great reason to suspect it. For now the *Seasons* of the Pleasures of Sin are over, he can not *relish* their Delights because his *cloyed* Appetite distastes them as the *full* Stomach doth the *Honey-comb*: and his *Soul* being now *uninterested* in all *sinful* Pleasure, and being naturally in continual Motion, must necessarily divert the *Current* of its Action some other way; and the *future* Sate to which it is so *nearly* allied being all it hath to work upon, it is no wonder if the Freedom of its Motion turn *thitherwards*, being diverted out of its *old* Channel: for if he love his Sins or the *World* never so well, he must leave them whether he will or no; if he dis-

like God and his *Holiness* and an *everlasting* Abode with him never so much, he is forced upon them, or *dash'd* upon *eternal* Misery, which it is impossible for him to chuse. So that now his good Resolution is scarce an *Act of Choice*; for tho' he would not chuse to obey God if he could still *enjoy* his *former* Lusts, yet *they* being out of his reach, he must take what is to be had. So that 'tis mighty Suspicious that the Sense of his Resolution is no more than this, *Holiness* is good when a Man is just dying, but while he lives and can enjoy his Lusts, they are a great deal better; so that the Approach of Death makes *Holiness* good to him upon this account only, because there would be something *worse*, and there can no longer be anything *better*; and 'tis to be feared he esteems it *good* only in comparison with *Hell* which without it will inevitably follow. And when it thus purchases the reputation of being *good* from the *near* approach of such a *mighty Evil*, it is not so much esteem'd a *Good* as a lesser *Evil*; which argues that the Mans Judgment is not at all altered, for still he looks on *Holiness* as an *Evil*, and in chusing it before *Hell*, he only chuses of two *Evils* the least, and 'tis extreamly Suspicious that he would no more have chosen it now than he did while he was *Well* and in *Health*, but that it stands at present out

of the Air of Temptation, and is presented to him without the *Counterpoize* of those sinful Delights for whose sake he formerly rejected it. For there are many *Apprehensions* which make *deep Impressions* not only on our *Brain* and *Fancies*, but on our *Affections* too, whilst these are calm and unprovoked; which impressions notwithstanding quickly vanish upon the starting of *new Objects*, and the provocations of *contrary Fancies* and *Affections* by them; so that it is impossible to be certain what those *good Resolutions* will come to which a Man makes when he hath no *Temptation* to the contrary. The utmost therefore that can be said of them is this, they may be sincere and they may hold out, but there is an *infinite Hazard* in them; they are easily made, because at present there is no *Temptation* against them, no *vicious Appetite* strong enough to controul them; but there is vast Reason to fear that should the Man recover, and his *Appetites* return again upon him, the next *Temptation* would betray him and make him *surrender* up all his Resolution; and consequently if he die before he hath made a Trial of himself, his *Condition* must needs be extremely uncertain, his *Hope* must sit upon the Brinks of *Despair*, and his *Soul* go trembling into *Eternity* to think what a *Hazard* it is now a running.

3. He resolves under the *Horrors* and *Agonies* of an *awakened* Conscience, and this also renders his Resolution extremely Suspicious. And indeed that Man must be in a *dead* Sleep that will not *awake* when *Death* is founding the *Trumpet* of *Judgment* in his Ears, and calling him instantly away to give up his *unprepared* Accounts. For though when *Judgment* seems to us at the other end of *Heaven* all is quiet, yet certainly when *Death* brings us to the very *Seat* of it, the *Ave* of that *dreadful* Tribunal of which we are now in *light*, and the *Sense* of so many *GUILTS* staring us in the face, of which we must the next *Moment* acquit our selves, or Die for ever, must necessarily shake our *sleepy* Consciences into *unspeakable* Horrors and Agonies, and make us infinitely Solicitous to fly from the *Wrath* that is to come. And in this Distress being conscious to himself that the best thing he can do is to resolve upon Amendment for the future, here he puts in for *Sanctuary* having no other hole to hide his guilty Head. So that now to resolve well is hardly an *Act* of *Choice*, and it is much to be feared that 'tis only an *Expedient* snatched up for the present Extremity; and though now he be very serious, yet that perhaps is only the effect of a sudden *Cast* of *Melancholy* on his *Thoughts*; and if it be, when that removes,

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his *Thoughts* will be quite of another Colour, or if it be the *Result* of a more *through* Conviction, yet it is very probable that may go off too when the Mans *Circumstances* are altered; that when the present *Tragick* Scene is removed out of sight, and the *Alarm* of his *approaching* Judgment sounds no longer in his Ears, he will presently let fall those Resolutions again which he took up only as a *shield*, against his Conscience. And this being so uncertain, what a fearful *Hazard* must that Man run that depends upon such Resolutions, and *imbarks* his Soul into *Eternity* in them? For tho it is possible they may be sincere, yet it is highly probable that they are not, but as they were *raised* only by a *Storm* of Horror; so if *that* were *laid* they would fall again; and if they should be *False* and *Hypocritical*, as God only knows whether they are or no, the poor Man is certainly *lost* and *undone* for ever.

4. And lastly, he resolves in the near Neighbourhood of *Eternity*, which also renders his Resolution very Suspicious. For the *Soul* is never more sensible of *Eternity* than when 'tis walking on the *Confines* of it; for the very loosing it from the *Body* wherein it dwells, and in which its *Motions* are all confined, doth many times give her some *lesser* Degree of those Advantages which *free* and *naked* Spirits have that are not *imprisoned* in
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Flesh. For the *less* the *Soul* is found to work by the *Body*, the *higher* are its Operations, and all her *extraordinary* Motions are a kind of *Ravishment* from Sense. It is therefore very probable that when the *Soul* is leaving the *Body*, it hath naturally a more *sensible* Touch and Feeling of its *eternal* State, because the *nearer* any thing is to its *Residence*, the more *vehement* is its Motion *thither*; and consequently the *nearer* the *Soul* is to its *eternal* Abode, the more *quick* and *vigorous* may we reasonably suppose its Motions *thither*; so that when the *other* World is in view, and it is just upon the *Region* of *Spirits*, it is no wonder if the Sense of her approaching *everlasting* Fate put her into great *Tremblings* and *Agonies*. For now there is nothing between *her* and *Eternity* to *intercept* her prospect of it; no *sinful* Pleasures or Delights to *interrupt* her Thoughts of it, or *deaden* the force of its Impressions: so that if in this *State* of Things she should not resolve to throw off her *Sins* and embrace *Vertue*, when *she* is in view of that *Hell* of *endless* Miseries to which those tend, and of that *Heaven* of Joys to which this aspires, it would be prodigious. But whether this Resolution will hold when *Heaven* and *Hell* are *vanish'd* out of sight again, it is a mighty *Hazard*; and sadly probable it is that if the Man recover from the *Brinks* of *Eternity*,
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and get farther off it, he will soon forget his *good* Resolutions, and leave all his Piety behind him. For when he resolved, alas he was *sick* and *dying*, leaving *this* World and launching into *another*; but when he is well again, the Case will be altered; *this* World will be present to him, and the other a great way off; and when his Reasolution is thus abandoned of the Motive that *animated* and held it together, there is infinite reason to suspect that it will immediately languish and expire. So that the Summ of all is this the *Death-bed* Penitent may possibly repent sincerely, but 'tis an *infinite* Hazard whether he will or no; and if he doth, it is *ordinarily* impossible for him to have any comfortable Assurance of it. I will not deny but in some *rare* and *extraordinary* Cases, to serve some great and excellent End, God may immediately *suggest* Comfort to him and give him the Joy of his Repentance; but whether ever he doth or will do so or no, is more than I am able to determine. For this I am sure of he hath no where obliged himself to it, and what he hath not promised, we have no reason to expect. For whatsoever is *extraordinary*, is more than what is promised, but the *ordinary* comforts of *dejected* Penitents are such as arise from an *inward* Sense of their own Sincerity, and of the *glorious* Hopes to which that intitles them.

them. But as for the Sincerity of the *Death-bed* Penitent it is so indiscernable by reason of *Suspicious* Circumstances, that without an *immediate* Revelation it is hardly possible to be perceived, and from any promise, that God hath made, there is not the least encouragement to hope for any such *immediate* Revelation. So that if any such Comfort be *vouchsafed* to him, it is doubtless very rarely; because it is *extraordinary*. I know there is nothing more common than for Men that never repented till they came to *die*, to *die* very comfortably; But alas I am *horribly* afraid that generally their *Comforts* are nothing but the *Effects* either of their *Stupidity*, or their *Disease*, or else the *Consequence* of very *false* and *dangerous* Principles.

First, many times it is plainly the *Effect* of their *wretched* Stupidity and Sottishness. For some Men we see are so *Stupid* in their Sins, that nothing but *Hell* flames will awake them; and though when they feel themselves upon the edge of *Eternity* passing into an *irreversible* Condition, they cannot forbear reflecting on their Sins, and starting at the dangerous *Consequence* of them; yet if they can but so far obtain of themselves as to weep for, and resolve against them, they think that all is well again, and so go into *Eternity* with a great deal of Comfort and Assurance. But these are a sort of *Stu-*

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pid Souls that have no regard of themselves, that are dying *forever* but have not Sense enough to apprehend their Danger, or to feel the Disease of which they are dying; for if they had they would never be so confident of their Recovery upon such *slight* and *easy* Applications; they would consider how false and hypocritical all their *former* Resolutions have proved, and how much cause there is to suspect lest *those* should prove as bad as *they*, and how impossible it is to impose upon God to whose *all-seeing* Eye the *inmost* Nature, and *utmost* Issues of Things are open and naked, which would necessarily render them extreamly jealous and Solicitous concerning their *eternal* State. I am now going away into everlasting *Weal* or *Woe*, Lord, what will become of me, the only security I have that it will go well with me *forever* is only this, that I am resolved upon a *future* Amendment; but alas I have *too* much reason to suspect my Resolution is *rotten* at the Core, and if it be, Woe be to me that ever I was Born. This without all doubt would be his Language if he were but thoroughly awakned into a Sense of his Danger, which because he is not he dies in a *Dream* of *Happiness* and will presently awake in real and intolerable *Misery*. And as this Comfort of the *Death-bed* Penitent doth oftentimes arise from his *Stupidity*, so,

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Secondly, many times 'tis nothing else but the mere *Effect* of his Disease. For there are many Diseases that have a natural *Enthusiasm* attending them, *viz.* such as *alternately* chill and freeze the *Blood*, and put the *Spirits* into unequal Motions; and to such as these *Dejections* and *Transports* do as naturally follow, as *Shiverings* and *Burnings* to an *Ague*. For when the *Blood* runs low, and the *Spirits* are weak and languid, then usually the *Scene* is all *Tragedy*; *melancholy* Vapours cloud and overwhelm their Fancies, and they are lost in a Wood of *Spiritual* Desertions. But when the *Tide* turns and warmer *Blood* flows up into the *Brain*, and refreshes the drooping Fancy with *Brisk* and *active* Spirits, then they are full of *Raptures* and *Extasies*, which, because they look on as streaming from an *heavenly* Original, they labour to swell and heighten to the utmost Brink of their Capacities; in so much that sometimes they are even stifled and overwhelmed with joy; and it is usual for them, especially in high *Fevers*, when their *Blood* is more briskly *fermented* by the sharpness of their Humours, to chafe and tickle themselves into real *Trances* and *Deliriums*, which they, not understanding the *Structure* of their own *Bodies*, and the Nature of their Disease, do commonly mistake for the immediate *Sealings* and *Incomes* of the

the *Spirit* of God. So that if they chance to die in one of these *Transports*, those that are *Spectators* of their End conclude that they depart in full Assurance, and are most infallibly received into the *joy* of their Master; whereas most commonly I fear their Joy expires with them, and leaves them desperate and miserable. But then

Thirdly, In the third and last place, their Comfort is many times nothing else but the Effect and Consequence of their own *false* and *dangerous* Principles. They have entertained such Principles as these, that their own *Personal* Righteousness is not at all necessary to render them acceptable to God, and that all is required of them is to rest and rely upon *Jesus Christ*; which if they do, all their *Defects* and *Miscarriages* shall be most certainly covered with the *Robe* of his Righteousness, and God will look upon them, and deal with them as if they had been as righteous as he. That Men have imbibed such Principles as these, and learned to practise on them, we who converse with *Sick-beds* cannot be ignorant; for when they have gone on impenitently to their *Death-beds*, and we come to inquire into the grounds of their Hopes, this we find is the *ordinary* Refuge they fly to, that *Jesus Christ* hath obeyed and suffered for them; and therefore they firmly rely upon him, and fling their *Souls*

into his Arms, and make no doubt but he will catch them and save them from the Wrath to come: as if the design of our *Saviours* Undertaking had been to privilege those who believe in him to Live wickedly, and Die comfortably. That he by his *Merit* and *Satisfaction* hath obtained this Grant of his Father, that all who heartily submit themselves unto him shall be received into his Favour, notwithstanding their past *Rebellions* and present *Imperfections* of Obedience, I think an undoubted Principle of *Christianity*; but that he hath obtained this Favour for us *absolutely* whether we submit to his Father or no, is so far from being *Christian*, that I think 'tis one of the most *Antichristian* Doctrines that was ever set on broach in the World; for it plainly defeats the main Design of *Christianity*, and totally dissolves all its Obligations. For whereas the principal Drift of *Christianity* is to teach Men to deny *Ungodliness* and *Worldly lusts*, and to Live *soberly*, *righteously* and *godly* in this present World, *this* Doctrine unteaches all again; and gives Men a Dispensation to live as wickedly as they please. For if upon my *Reliance* upon Christ I shall be received into Gods Favour whether I submit to him or no, farewell to all Obligations of Obedience. What need Men be so Sollicitous of making such hear-
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ty *Submissions* of their *Souls* to God, if the Righteousness of their *Saviour* be a *Sanctuary* from the Authority of his **Laws*? So that for Men to rely confidently upon *Christ* before they are secure that their *Souls* are heartily subjected to him, is a piece of the greatest Arrogance and Presumption; and tho' they may pacify their Conscience with it when they are dying, yet when they are dead they will find they have made more bold than welcome with their *Saviour*; that he will not be a *Patron* to their sins, nor side with them so far in their *Rebellions* against his Father, as to shelter them in his *Wounds* from the due *Vengeance* of eternal Fire. Altho' therefore these *Death-bed* Penitents do too often die very comfortably, yet considering what *false* grounds their Comforts generally stand on, I had much rather see them go down to their *Graves* in the greatest sorrow and anxiety of Soul; for if they should miscarry, as there is vast reason to fear they will, it grieves my Soul to think what a *surprize* they will be in, how they will be *blanked* and *amazed* when, contrary to their bold Presumptions of waking in immortal Joys, they find themselves among *Devils* and *damm'd Ghosts*, abandoned to endless Misery and Despair. And indeed I cannot but wonder that a Man who hath deferred his Repentance to a *Death-bed* should have

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the confidence to talk of Comfort and Assurance ; which is such a Reward as God usually appropriates to *long* and most *eminent* Piety. But for a Man that hath rebelled against God all his days to *pick* up presently after a few sighs and submissions, and pretend to as much Assurance of his *Saviour* as if he had been his *ancient* Friend and Familiar, is *down right* inexcusable Impudence. Alas *poor* Man ! what less canst thou do in Modesty than spend the *small* Remainder of thy Days in *Sighs*, and *Tears*, and deep *Humiliations* ; and when thou hast done thy utmost, to content thy self with this, that thou art not altogether desperate ? But as for Comfort and Assurance, it would well become thee to leave *them* to those who have better deserved them ; for after all thou canst do, if thou gettest to *Heaven* it will be a Wonder of mercy : so that unless thou art absolutely besotted, thou must die in great fear, and go trembling away into *Eternity*. So miserable is the State of the *death-bed* Penitent, that it is a mighty Hazard whether ever he repent to purpose, and if he doth, it is ordinarily impossible to reap any comfortable assurance of it.

And now I expect that it will be objected against this Discourse that it favours of *too* much Rigour and Severity, because it represents the State of *dying* Penitents so very

near to desperate. To which I briefly answer, that if it were absolutely desperate, as I confess I think it very *near* so, yet doubtless the best way is to represent Things as they are : for the nature of the Thing is already fixed, and neither your Opinion nor mine will alter it. Indeed if I could recover a *dying* Man by telling him that he is not a *dying*, it would be cruelty in me to pronounce him past Recovery ; and so could I save the *dying* Penitent by telling him that he is secure, I was very much to blame should I say his Case is desperate ; but alas ! if it be so, it will be so, let me say what I please ; so that in pronouncing that it is so, I only make him sensible of it a few *Moments* sooner. I do but shew him what he must trust to, and what he will presently be convinced of by *woeful* Experience ; and by ringing out a *passing* Bell to his *departing* Soul, I do him this kindness at least that he will not be in *Hell* before he is aware of it. And certainly this is some Charity, tho' it be severe ; but yet neither do I represent the Case to be altogether desperate, tho' I must confess some very great and eminent *Divines* have done so ; for I have endeavoured to shew that *true* Repentance is not *impossible* on a *Death-bed*, tho' *extreamly hazardous* and *difficult* ; so that still there is *some* Hope,

enough to encourage the Sinners *utmost* Endeavour, and keep his Head *above* water ; and for him to give up himself to Despair while there is any glimmering of hope, is to enter into *Hell* before his time, which is a degree of imprudence next to *that* he hath been already guilty of, in putting himself upon this dismal Extremity. But supposing it had been represented as wholly desperate, yet this can occasion no Man that hears me to despair, unless it be thro' his own Default. For God be praised I am not now preaching to a sick or dying *Auditory* ; you are now well and in health, and have a space and season of Repentance before you, which if you will but diligently improve, you prevent the *fearful* Hazard whereunto a *Death-bed* Penitence exposes you. But if thro' your own neglect you should fall into it and despair in it, who can you blame but your selves for it. All that I aim at is to prevent your Danger by persuading you to repent betime ; but if you will be so cruel to your selves as to delay it till it is *too* late, and then *Despair* overtake you, you may thank your selves for it that would take no warning. And therefore to render this Argument yet more effectual, I intend to represent to you at large the *Folly* and *Wickedness* of deferring our Repentance to
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the last, and thereby to excite and provoke you to a *speedy* Resolution of Amendment; that so when the *Bridegroom* comes you may not with these *foolish Virgins* in my Text find the *Door of Heaven* shut against you, but that having finished your work, you may be admitted with *that good and profitable Servant* into the joy of your Master.

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REVELATIONS II. 21.

I gave her space to repent of her fornication and she repented not.

THE Person here spoken of is *Jesabel*, as you may see in the foregoing verse ; but who this *Jesabel* was is very much disputed by *Expositors*. *Epiphanius* and some that follow him refer this title to those Women Hereticks, *Priscilla*, *Maximilla*, and *Quintilla* who followed *Montanus*, and about *Commodus* his Reign took upon them to be *Prophetesses*, and under *that* pretence propagated many monstrous *Heresies*. But since it must be after *St. John's* time that those Women were in the Church of *Thiatria*, and since *St. John* here speaks not prophetically of what should be, but *historically* of what already was, is it not supposeable that these *Montanist Women* should be the *Jesabel* here spoken of: besides that the *Character* here given her doth not agree with that *Sect*, for these *Montanists* were a very severe and strict *Sect*, and that was the main motive which seduced *Tertullian* to it ; whereas this *Jesabel*, or *Sect* described by her Name, is here accused of *Fornication*, and sacrificing to *Idols*. So that it seems more probable that by *her* is meant
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either the whole *Sect* of the *Gnosticks*, which as all agree was infamous for *Leudness*, *Uncleanness* and *Idolatry*; or else some particular *Woman* who was an eminent *Patronefs* and *Ring-leader* of that Party. And if he mean this *latter*, as it seems most probable by the Distinction he makes between *her* and those that committed *Adultery* with her, that is, her Followers; then it is probable that he means *Helena the Whore* of *Simon Magus*, who was Father of the *Gnosticks*; whom he stiled his *πρωτη ευνουα*, or *first Conception*. And well might she be called *Jesabel*, since she so much resembled the Wife of *Ahab* called by that Name in her notorious *Whoredoms* and *Idolatries*; but yet in her he reprehends the whole *Sect* which was all involved with her in the same *Impenitence*. So that it was equally true both of *her* and of her Followers, *that God gave them space to repent of their Fornications, and they repented not*, that is, God's patience waited on them, and gave them time to reform their *leud* and *infamous* Practices; but still they deferred and put it off, and under all his *Forbearance* continued obstinate and impenitent. So that the design of the Words is to represent the *Evil* of Mens putting off their Repentance when God in mercy forbears them, and gives them space enough to perform it. And how great an *Evil* this is I shall endeavour to represent to you.

1. By shewing you the *Wickedness*,
2. The *Absurdity*, and
3. The *Danger* of it.

1. I shall shew you the *Wickedness* of it, and that in these following particulars:

1. 'Tis a *prophane* Mockery of God's Patience.
2. 'Tis an *ungrateful* Undervaluing of his Service.
3. 'Tis an *open* Contempt to his Authority.
4. 'Tis an *impious* Presumption on his Goodness.
5. 'Tis an *arrogant* Defiance of his Displeasure.

1. To defer and put off our Repentance when God gives us space to repent is a *prophane* Mockery of his Patience. That he did not strike us *dead* upon our first sin, and consign us immediately to the *chains* of Darkness, was purely the Effect of his Goodness; 'twas this that obliged him to try us a little longer in hope that at last we might be prevailed with to consider our danger, and correct our folly before it had determined us to an *irreversible* Ruin. Whilst therefore we linger out the space of our Repentance in Delays, we sport and *dally* with the Patience of God; we promise fair, and give it hope that it shall at last obtain its Ends upon us; but when we come to performance,

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we baffle and disappoint it, and render all its past attendance ineffectual. For when the Date of our former Promise is expired, and God expects our Performance, instead of that, we only give him new Promises, and pay him with *Words* instead of *Things*; as if by our Promises we only intended to raise in him an expectation of our Repentance, that so we might have an opportunity to vex him with a Disappointment. We promise we will repent *hereafter* only to get leave to sin for the *present*, and so when *that hereafter* comes we promise again, and only repeat the *old* Delusion; as if we meant to tantalize his Patience by profering the *golden* Fruit of our Repentance, and snatching it away again before he can lay hold of it. Now what a *fearful* wickedness is this for Men to put such Tricks upon the *Almighty*, still to defer the payment of a Debt that hath been so long due, and so often demanded, and still to pay his *Demands* with Promises, and only feed his Expectations with Air! as tho' we thought him bound to attend our *Leisure*, and to give us Credit to run deeper on score upon the security of our Promise of *future* Payment which we have already forfeited over and over.

2. Thus to put off and delay our Repentance, is a most *base* and *ungrateful* Undervaluing of his Service: For the Reason why we delay

delay our Repentance, is, because we think it will be time enough to return to our Duty *hereafter*, when the Opportunities of Sin are gone, and the Pleasure of it is out of season. For into what *other* sense can God construe our *Delays* but only this, that it is our Design to shift off him and his Service, till we have served our Lusts as long as we are able, and never to begin our Repentance till we are able to be wicked no longer. Now I beseech you, could you without Horror and Trembling make such an *Address* to God as this, O God, I know it is my Duty, and the very End of my Life to serve thee; but I beseech thee, be not angry, if while I live I serve my Lusts, and imploy the Powers thou hast given me in Rebellion against thee: And if thou wilt but indulge me this, I will be thy humble Servant when I am good for nothing, neither to serve, nor disobey thee: Do but have Patience till I am Bed-rid, and can enjoy the World and my Lusts no longer, and then I will return to thee, and be Sorry for my Sins, and wish that I had never offended thee. I would now devote the Service of my Youth and Strength to thee, but that I am sensible it is too good for thee; and therefore come what will, I will feed my Lusts with the Marrow of my Days, and if the dull insipid Bone will content thee, it is at thy Service. This, though it be horrible Language, is yet the *natural* Sense of our *Delays*. We would repent im-
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mediately, but that we think it is a Thousand Pities such *fair* Opportunities of sinning should be lost, and so many *precious* Minutes should be so *ill* bestowed: So that the reason of our *Delay* is this, that at present we apprehend we can spend our time more pleasantly in sinning on, than in the Exercise of a *severe* Repentance, and consequently, while we can still sin on with Pleasure, we shall still have the same reason to delay, and never think it reasonable to begin our Repentance till we are old, decrepid, or dying, and can sin with Pleasure no longer. Now what a *profane* Reflection is it upon God and his Service, to think our selves *too* good to serve him till we are good for nothing; that the *Dregs* and *Lees* of our Life are good enough for him, and that he ought to be satisfied with the *leavings* of our Lusts, and to take it as a Favour that we will repent of our sins when we are no longer capable of sinning with Pleasure? With what Patience can he endure to be thus slighted and contemned by us, to be thus rudely put off with the *Refuse* of our Lusts, thus unmannerly treated with the *Scraps* of the *Devil's* Table?

3. To defer our Repentance when God gives us space to repent, is an open contempt of his Authority; for by the Laws of *Religion* we are bound either always to continue

tinue innocent, or when we have contracted any Guilt, to expiate it by *immediate Repentance* ; for so long as we continue under any guilty Impenitence, we are in a state of *actual* Rebellion against God, and are not only accountable for the Guilt of the first Sin, but also for *that* of not having repented of it. And though we do not repeat the first Sin any more, yet our very continuing impenitent under the Guilt of it, brings a distinct Guilt upon us, and renders us doubly criminal in the sight of God ; for unless our sinning against God doth *cancel* the Obligation of his Laws, they must necessarily oblige us to repent, that is, to revoke our wicked purpose, and return to our Obedience as soon as ever we have broken and transgressed it. 'Tis true indeed as for particular *affirmative* Precepts, they being always relative to *Time*, and *Place*, and *Persons*, are to be practised only in *special* Times, and *pertinent* Occasions, because they being but Parts of a good Life, must give way by turns for other Parts and Instances of it, which are of the like particular and limited Nature with themselves ; but yet we are always obliged to the Purpose and Disposition of Practising these, whensoever Occasion doth require it. A man is not always bound to be doing *Justice*, by giving *Alms*, or saying his *Prayers* ; but to the *Devotion* of Pray-
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er, the *Disposition* of Justice, and the *Charity* of Alms he is continually obliged: These being Works of the *inward* Man cannot be limited to Times and Opportunities, nor receive any *accidental* Determinations from without, but are always possible, and always good, and always necessary; for the performance of them depends only on the *Grace* of God, and the *Will* of Man, and *that* never fails, if *this* doth not; and therefore is always possible, unless we will not, but it is always necessary whether we will or no: So that when we have broken our purpose of obeying God by any *actual* Sin, it is another distinct Sin, not to renew it by *immediate* Repentance, and when by this *actual* Sin, we have lost our disposition to obey God, and contracted the contrary, there is in this a *proper* Guilt, and Venom distinct from that *actual* Sin that introduced it. But then there are *general* Precepts of *Religion*, such as to love God, and to Repent from *dead* Works; the *first* of which includes the *whole* Religion of a Man, the *second*, the *whole* Religion of a Sinner; and consequently we being *both*, must needs be universally obliged to both these Duties in all Accidents, Times, and Cases. For when once we have *apostatized* from our Duty, all our *after-obedience* is an Act of Repentance; and therefore though the Command of it be affirmative,

firmative, yet because it is universal, including all those Duties, which by binding at *several* Times, do fill up all our Time ; there can be no Time in which we are not bound to repent. This I have the longer insisted on, because it is a great *Question* among the *Roman Casuists*, whether a Man be always bound to this Duty, and *some* of them have been so wicked, as to determin that a Man is not bound to repent till he comes to die ; *others*, that it is sufficient if he repent *once* a Year ; *others*, *thrice* upon the Three great *Holidays* of *Christmas*, *Easter*, and *Whitsunday* ; as if there were any time wherein it was not our Duty to return to our Duty ; or the Laws of our Religion did only oblige us at certain seasons, and in the Intervals gave us a *free* Dispensation to live as wickedly as we pleased. Since therefore as soon as we have sinned, we are bound *immediately* to repent, it necessarily follows, that he who sins, and then delays his Repentance, sins Twice ; his very Delay being a farther Provocation. For how can we imagine that he who persists in *Rebellion* against God Twenty Years together, doth not much more offend him, than he who submits within Twenty *Months*, or Twenty *Days*, or Twenty *Hours* ; and if the longer we persist, the more we do offend him, then every *delay* of our Repentance must needs be a further

ther Provocation. The Sum of all therefore is this, That every Day God calls us to Repentance, and that every Call of his ought to be regarded, and consequently, that every regardless *Delay* of it, adds to the heap of our Guilt, and helps to fill up the Measure of our Iniquities. And what a *rude* Contempt is it of God's Authority, when he commands us to repent to *Day*, to cry well we will repent to *morrow*? Lord, we beseech thee be not so hasty with us, suffer us to offend thee yet a little longer; for whether thou wilt or no, we are resolved to do it. We will repent, but will not be prescribed when, as for that leave it to us, for say what thou wilt, we are fully resolved to take leave to do it when we please. This in effect is the impious meaning of every *Delay* of our Repentance, and when God commands us to repent, we might as modestly tell him that we will not repent at all, as when he commands us to repent *now*, tell him, that we will repent *hereafter*.

4. To defer our Repentance when God giveth us space to repent, is an *impious* Presumption on his Goodness. The reason why God forbears us when we sin, is to give us *second* Thoughts, and to see our Danger, and to run away from it; that so he may not *surprize* us into ruine: for the end of his *long-suffering*, is to lead us to Repentance; but when upon this consideration we
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take encouragement to delay, we do not only defeat his Goodness, but so far as in us lies, render it injurious to him. For we war against him under the Protection of his kindness to us, and fortifie our selves in our *Rebellion*, in that very *Goodness*, and *Long-suffering*, with which he seeks to conquer and subdue us. O barbarous Ingratitude! that we should fetch Arguments from his mercy to offend him, and maintain Enmity against him out of the *Revenue* of his own indulgence! would you not look on that *Malefactor* as a *Monster*, that should rob his *Judge* meerly because he reprieved him, and use him with all the *Despise* and *Ignominy*, because he knew him to be a *merciful* Man, and will be loath to hang him the next *Sessions*? and is it not altogether as monstrous for us to abuse God, because he is kind to us, and to take Encouragement to rob him of our Duty, because we know he is unwilling to ruine us? but tho' every Man hath not Impudence enough to assign *this* Reason, yet it is plain, this lies at the bottom of all their *Delays*. *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily*, saith the Wise Man, *therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in^{em} to do Evil*, Eccles. 8.11. But what horrid Baseness is this to urge his Goodness against himself, and fetch Motives from his Mercy to affront his Authority? it seems, it
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he were *worse* to us, we would be *better* to *him*; if he were less kind, we would be more dutiful. O Wretches that we are! I had almost said, 'tis even *pity* that we have a God to deal with, that we are not under the Government of some *Fury* that would watch for our *halting*, and catch at all Opportunities to plague and punish us; and we were best have a care we do not presume too much upon God, for tho' he bears long, he will not bear always; and there is nothing can sooner provoke him, than to see us conduct our *Rebellions* against him under the *Banners* of his own Goodness. This is such an *intolerable* Provocation as is sufficient to enrage a *Soul* of Patience, and turn the most *boundless* Mercy into *Fury*: and if once his Wrath be kindled against us, he will make us rue for ever in our Abuses of his Goodness.

5. And lastly, To defer our Repentance when God gives us space for it, is an *arrogant* Defiance of his Displeasure, for God hath sufficiently declared to us the Displeasure he takes in the *Delays* of our Repentance. Thus in his *holy* Word he hath given us fair warning of it: thus *Rom. 2.4. despisest thou the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering, not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to Repentance?* From whence I argue 1. that the Goodness of

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God is a *Motive* to Repentance. 2. That not to be persuaded by it, is to despise his Goodness. 3. That this despising his Goodness by *delaying* our Repentance, *is treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath*. So also *Rev. 2. 5. Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of its place except thou repent*. Where he plainly declares, that if our Repentance be not very quickly, his Judgments will be *too quick* for us; by which he plainly signifies how much he is displeased with our *Delays*, how importunately they urge and provoke him to overwhelm us with a *speedy* Destruction. And accordingly we see by Experience, how he takes some away in their *early* sins, and gives them no respite; and he who hath made it *Damnation* to some for not repenting instantly, hath made it *damnable* to all. The Earth doth not open, and *swallow up* all *Rebels* in the Day of their *Mutiny*; but it did so *once*, and thereby God hath sufficiently signified to all Ages his Displeasure against *Rebellion*; And so it is in deferring Repentance; for that some have smarted for it *eternally* is a sufficient Manifestation that God is displeased with every one that defers it. Whilst therefore we delay our Repentance from time to time, we sit down quietly under the
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divine. Displeasure, as if it were altogether indifferent whether the *Almighty* be pleased or displeased with us; we do as good as say, Lord, we know well enough thou wouldst have us repent immediately, and that if we do not, thou wilt be angry with us; but be thou never so angry, we will not repent as yet, we must enjoy our Lusts a little longer, and if thou wilt be displeased, we will run the venture. We had rather endure thy Frowns a while, than part with our sins for ever, and think it much more tolerable to be hated by the Fountain of all Love and Goodness, than abandoned of all our sinful Pleasures. This is such Language perhaps as the boldest Sinner would hardly be able to pronounce without trembling, but yet such as it is, it is the natural Sense of every Mans Actions, who delays and puts off his Repentance: he knows that God is displeased with him, but regards it not, and as if he were ambitious of being a *Heroe* in Wickedness, he defies *Heaven*, and dallies with its *Thunder-bolts*, and runs into the Mouth of its *Canon* whilst they are spitting Fire, and roaring out Destruction upon him.

And thus you see the monstrous Wickedness of Mens delaying their Repentance, which is such, as had we not feared our Consciences, and stifled our natural Sense of God, we could never be able to reflect on without Horror and Agonies. And so I pass to the

Second Head of Discourse, the great *Absurdity* of delaying our Repentance ; which I shall endeavour to demonstrate in these following particulars.

1. It is putting *off* a Work that must be done to the most *unfitting* Season of doing it.
2. It is putting it *off* upon no other Reason, but what will *hereafter* be more prevalent than *now*.
3. It deprives us of the Satisfaction of having done what we must do at last, and prolongs the Pain and Trouble of doing it.
4. It defers the doing it upon no other Presumption, but that it shall *one* Day dearly repent of its own Neglect.

1. To delay our Repentance, is to put *off* a Work that must be done to the most *unfitting* Season of doing it. That Repentance is indispensibly necessary to the *Recovery* and *Happiness* of a Sinner, is a Principle wherein all the *reasonable* World are agreed ; and since it must be done, it is highly reasonable we should take the best Opportunity of doing it, and for a Man to say, I must do such a thing, and am resolved to do it, but however, I will take the most *improper* Season to do it in, is the most *absurd* and *ridiculous* Thing in the World. But for a Man to repent in, there is no Season can be

so convenient as the *present*; for it will never be so easy for us to repent as *now*; the difficulty of it will daily grow upon our hands, and if we do not engage in it *immediately*, it will be harder to *morrow* than it is to day. When Men begin to sin, their Nature *starts* and *boggles* at it, from an *innate* Sense of God, and of their Duty, and this natural *shinens* must be tamed and broken e'er they can be *through-pac'd* in Wickedness; but when they have inured themselves to it by *frequent* Acts, they grow by degrees familiar with it, and then every *Act* breeds *Delight* in it, and every *Delight* begets a *Desire* of repeating it, and that *Desire* brings forth a *new Act*. And when a Man hath walked the *Rounds* a while in this Circle, at last he centers in *Custom* and *Habit* of sinning, and then every new *Act* will confirm the *Habit*, and root it deeper in our Natures, and so as we sin on, it will grow stronger and stronger, 'till at last it becomes almost *fatal* and *necessary*, and then the Lord have mercy upon us; for without a *Miracle* of Grace we shall never be able to retrieve our selves. Thus every step we take in our sinful Progress, leads us further out of our way, and renders our return more *hard* and *difficult*, so that by going on in a *sinful* Course, we do what in us lies to *block up* the way of our Return, and do as it were build a Wall be-

hind us, to disable our selves from making *any* Retreat. What a ridiculous Thing therefore is it for Men to pretend that they will repent, but not yet ; when it is so apparent, that if they repent not now, it will never be so easie again as long as they live ? To *Morrow* it will be more difficult than *now*, and every Day it is delayed, will drive it nearer to an Impossibility : So that by our *foolish* Delays, we do but make Work for our selves, and heap up *Difficulties* on our own Heads ; we resolve that we will repent, but withal, that we will not go about it, till we have render'd it *more* difficult, and our selves *less* able to do it. Our Soul is wounded, and must die without the sovereign *Balsom* of Repentance, which we therefore resolve to apply and make use of ; but first her *Wound* shall *fester* into a *Gangrene*, not to be cured, but by the most painful *Lancings*, and *Corrosives*. And can there be any Thing more ridiculous for a Man to resolve to do a Thing, and at the same time resolve to make it more difficult before he doth it ? For certainly, if our Repentance after so many *Delays*, should at last commence, which is very questionable, it will in all probability be accompanied with so many *sad* Circumstances, so many *Tumults* of Passion, and *Opposers* of Conscience, so many *piercing* Sorrows, and *bitter* Agonies, that we shall
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dearly *repent* we did not repent sooner.

2. To delay our Repentance, is to resolve to defer this Work to *hereafter*, upon a Reason which will *then* be much more prevalent than *now*; and for a Man to defer a Thing to *hereafter* which he resolves to do upon such a Reason as will be much more prevalent *hereafter* than *now*, is doubtless the absurdest Thing in the World. Now the main Reason why Men are *now* unwilling to repent is, because they love their sins, and are unwilling to part with them, and in all likelihood, hereafter they will be much more unwilling; so that this Reason will every Day improve upon their hands, and have so much the more strength, by how much the longer they defer their Repentance: So that we can have no Reason in the World against fixing on the *present* Time, but only because it is *present*; but when *hereafter* comes to be *present*, the Reason will be just the same. But as for our Unwillingness to leave our sins, if that be the Reason of our Delay, that will every Day increase and grow more prevalent upon us, for Sin gains upon the Will by Practice, the Delight of it recommends it to the Desire, and renders us more fond of its embraces; so that if we defer our Repentance till *hereafter*, because we are unwilling to leave our Sins, when that *hereafter* is present, we

shall have much more reason to defer than now ; and so the plain Sense of our deferring our Repentance upon this reason, is this, *I cannot yet forsake my Sins, because I love them, and am highly pleased with them, but hereafter I am resolved I will; but first I will act them a little longer, and grow more in love with them, and then when I love them more, and am more enslaved to them, I will be sure to hate and forsake them for ever.* Whilst therefore we delay our Repentance, because our Sins do please us, we shall have the same reason to delay it for ever. For the longer we live in Sin, in all probability, the more it will please us ; and so *Twenty Years* hence, the reason of our *Delay* will be far more prevalent than *now* ; and if we forsake not our sin till it ceases to please us, we shall never forsake it as long as we live: So that to resolve not to repent *now*, because our sins do please us, is the same thing in effect as to resolve not to repent at all ; and indeed this generally lies at the bottom of all such Resolutions, when mens Consciences like *importunate* Creditors begin to *damn* and *clamour* upon them, they are forc'd many times to give good Words, and appoint some *future* Day of Payment, else they will put them to a great deal of Trouble, and ever and anon arrest them with Horrors and Affrightments ; but still they purpose to run further in Debt, and

and to put off the Day of payment from time to time, till they are utterly *insolvent*. So that by these promises of repenting *hereafter*, Men only delude themselves, & under a *specious* Pretence of *future* Repentance put tricks upon their Consciences to blind and bribe them, that they may not disturb them whilst they are sinning themselves into Ruin.

3. By delaying our Repentance we deprive our selves of the satisfaction of having done what we must do at last, and prolong the pain and trouble of doing it. To have accomplish'd a necessary Work, especially if it be difficult and important, is a *great* satisfaction to the Mind; and whereas, whilst it is yet to do, the prospect of the Pain and Labour we must undergo in doing it creates in us a great deal of *Trouble* and *Anxiety*; when once it is done, the very *Reflection* on the Pains and Labours we have past, sweetens our *present* repose, and crowns it with *greater* Joy and Triumph. And so it is with Repentance, which we all acknowledge to be a most necessary Work, and of the *vallest* *Moment* and Importance to us; and tho' it be never so painful and difficult, yet we must undergo it, or that which is much more intolerable; so that if once it were done, it could not but give a *great* satisfaction to our Minds, and fill us with *unspeakable* Joy. When a Man shall thus reflect with himself, *Blessed*
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be God, I have done that work, which had it been yet to do I must have done, or been undone for ever. I charged thro' all those pains and difficulties that were wont to startle and affright me, and by the grace of Heaven am come off victoriously. O happy Achievement! how well am I rewarded for all my labour! now I am past it, and settled in the quiet possession of my conquest! When, I say, a Man can thus reflect with himself, it must needs be unspeakable Pleasure to him: whereas he who defers his Repentance and hath it yet to do, is in perpetual pain and anxiety; whilst he thus considers with himself, *alas, to repent is a very sad and painful work! but yet at last I must undergo it, or suffer that which is a thousand times more painful.* I must lament and weep for my folly, watch and pray against it, struggle with and overcome it, or rue for it to all Eternity. O that it were done! but O how loath am I to go about it! O that my pain were over! but O how afraid am I to endure it! Thus the poor Wretch for fear of Pain exposes himself to a lingering Torment, and whilst by one brave Attempt he might ease himself, and set his soul at rest for ever, he lengthens away his Life in misery, and is held with the fear of his Remedy: just like some Men under the torment of the Stone, they know they must be cut or die, but the frightful apprehensions they have of their Remedy

Remedy makes them delay it from time to time. They will indure it, they say, rather than lose their Lives, but when they come to the tryal their heart fails and they must needs have a little longer respite; and all the while they are full of pain and uneasiness, and full of *sad* Apprehensions of those severer pains they must indure in order to their recovery, and yet these at last they must indure too or that which is much more terrible to them; whereas had they but indured them at first, they might have saved themselves all those Torments, and all those Fears of farther Torments which they indured in the time of their delay. And is not this extremely absurd and ridiculous? And yet just thus it is with those who put off their Repentance. Had they repented on their *first* Lapse, their hearts might have been at ease a great while ago, and they might have saved themselves all those gripes and *twinges* of Conscience which they have been forced to indure. But Repentance they thought was a *sad* remedy, and the fear of that too augmented the torment of their disease. But be it never so sad, they know well enough they must at last apply it, or perish for ever. Well; but they will apply it, that they resolve on; but vain they would have a little longer respite. Ah foolish Souls! will it *hereafter* be more easy than

than *now* to you? Will your *Delay* do you think mollify the pain and anguish of it? Alas no, it will rather render it *more* dolorous. So that all the while you delay, and think of it only but do not do it, you do but *anticipate* the Torment, and prolong the misery of it; and whereas if once it were done you would be at rest, and all the pain of your *past* Guilt, and the fear of your *future* Repentance would be over; whilst you only think of it but do it not, it is a *continued* Disease to you, and the very Apprehensions you have of it are many times more dolorous than the performance.

4. And lastly, to delay our Repentance is to do a thing upon no other presumption, but that we shall one Day repent of our own Action. And can there be any thing more ridiculous than for a Man to do an Action in hope that he shall live to repent of it? For either the Action is reasonable, or not, if it be, why should he hope to repent of it? if it be not, why should he be so extravagant to do it? so that for a Man to do a Thing upon Presumption that he shall repent of it, is to *proclaim* himself a Fool; and yet this is the Case of him that *delays* his Repentance. For the very *Delay* is a Sin superadded to those Actions of which he ought to repent, & have al-
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ready demonstrated; from whence it necessarily follows, that *this* must be repented of as well as *those*. So that for Men to encourage themselves not to repent at *present*, in hope that they shall repent *hereafter*, is to act professedly contrary to the reasons of Things. For if the Nature of our *Delay* is such as that we have reason to hope we shall one day repent of it, this is so far from being a *proper* Encouragement to it, that it is one of the *strongest* Reasons that can be urged against it; and for a Man to *rob* in hope to be hang'd for it, or to drink deadly *Poison* in hope to be convulsed and tormented with it, is every whit as wise and rational, as to *delay* our Repentance in hope to repent of it. For who but a *Mad-man*, or one that is resolved to act counter to all Rules of Reason, would ever practise on this *extravagant* Conclusion; *I will do this or that Action at present, in hope that hereafter I shall be sorry for, and extremely ashamed of it, and wish a Thousand times that I had never done it. I know it is a great Evil, and do plainly perceive, that one time or other I shall find it so; but come what will, I will venture upon it, in hope that hereafter I shall be ashamed with the horror of it, and tormented for it upon the Rack of a self-condemning Conscience.* And now, I beseech you, is this a *reasonable* Hope, or *proper* Encouragement for a wise Man to act upon?

upon? or rather, is it not one of the most *absurd* and *foolish* that ever any *Fool* or *Mad-man* proceeded on? and yet this is plainly the Meaning of our Pretension, when we *delay* our Repentance in hope to repent of it *hereafter*.

And thus you see how extravagantly absurd it is for Men to *defer* and put off their Repentance; so that methinks had we any *Reverence* for our selves, any *Respect* for those *reasonable* Natures by which we are constituted Men, we should be ashamed to act so inconsistently with all the Rules of *Reason* and *Sobriety*: and so I pass on to

3. The Third and last Head, under which I proposed to demonstrate the mighty Evil of delaying our Repentance, and that is the Danger of it; which I shall endeavour to make appear in these following particulars.

1. Every *Delay* of our Repentance, is a nearer Approach towards *final* Impenitence.
2. 'Tis a *desperate* Venture of our Opportunity of Repentance.
3. It *indangers* the forfeiting that Grace without the Assistance whereof we cannot repent.
4. It *drives* us *nearer* to the last Extremity.

1. Every

I. Every *Delay* of our Repentance is a nearer Approach towards *final* Impenitence. For a sinful State is like a *shelving* Pool, in which the farther a Man wades, the deeper it is; and so deeper and deeper till he come to the bottom of it; and when we are there we are sunk beyond all hope of Recovery; so that at every step forward, we are in Danger of going beyond our Depth, and plunging into an *irreversible* Ruine. For *final* Impenitence, which is the Consummation and Perfection of all Sin, is nothing but a *persevering* Neglect, or Refusal to repent. And as a Man is always dying, and that which we call *Death* is only the *last* and *finishing* Act of it; so *final* Impenitence is not the Sin of one *Day* or *Moment*, unless it be by accident, but it is a state of Sin, begun as soon as ever the Sin is acted, and carried on through each *repeated* Action, and in fine is nothing but the same Sin so many times told over. But if it should happen, that he who sinned *Yesterday* should die to *Day*, it would be *final* Impenitence in him to defer his Repentance that one *Day*. So that our first *Delay* of Repentance, is the beginning of our *final* Impenitence, which in all its *Periods* differs from the *Delay* only by Chance and Accident; it is materially the *same* Sin, and if Death chance to strike the next *Moment*, it will also have the *same* Formality.

For

For as he that dies *young*, dies as really as he that dies after *Fourscore* Years, so he that dies in the midst of a short *Delay* of his Repentance is as well *finally* Impenitent, as he that is snatch'd away to die *for ever* after *Fourscore* Years Impenitence; for though the Evil be not so *great*, nor the Judgment consequent to it so *heavy*, yet is it as *fatal*, and as *irreversible* as the *Decree* of Damnation on the *fallen* Angels. So that all the Time we *delay*, and put off our Repentance, we are bordering on the worst of Evils, we are just upon the *Confines* of an *irreversible* Mischief, and the next step for all we know may carry us beyond Recovery. For if Death should intervene between us and to *morrow*, this Days *delay* will be *fatal* and *irreparable*. And can we stand upon the *brinks* of this *Precipice*, and feel how the ground sinks underneath us, and yet sleep on securely, without ever thinking whither we are falling, or being in the least concerned at this *amazing* Prospect of our Danger? Methinks if we had any concern for our own safety, we should think it high time *now* to start up, and run away from our *neighbouring* Ruin, and not presume any longer to swim within the Circumference of this *fatal Whirl-Pool* that is every *Moment* sucking us in, and for all we know the next *Moment* may swallow us up irrecoverably.

2. Every

2. Every *Delay* of our Repentance is a desperate Venture of the *Opportunity* we have to repent in, and that is this *present* Life, which is the *Day* in which we are to do our Work, the *Time* of Tryal in which we are to pass our *Probation*, and perform our *Exercise* of *Eternity*; and therefore considering how uncertain this Life is, and to how many *Events* and *Casualties* it is exposed, it must needs be a most *desperate* Venture for a Man to *delay* his Repentance. For who can tell but while we talk of repenting *hereafter*, there may be some *latent* Disease *undermining* the *Fort* of Life, and ready to seize the *Garrison* of our Souls; So that perhaps before *this* Day is at an end, we may be surprised in the midst of our *Delay*, and lose all our hopes of to *morrow*? For what is *vain* Man that he should talk of repenting *hereafter*, when perhaps, whilst the Word is in his Mouth, there may be an *Imposthume* in the Head or Breast, or a *ripe harden'd Stone* in his Kidney ready to drop down into his Bladder the next Moment; when he may be *inflamed* with a *Fever* by what he drinks to *Night*, or drowned in a *Surfeit* with what he eats to *Morrow*; when he may *expire* his Soul with the next Breath, or suck in *Poison* with the next Air, and so many *unlook'd* for Accidents may put an end to his talk of repenting *hereafter*,

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after, and render it impossible for ever. And suppose we should be thus *surprized*, as many others have been before us, that while we are *merry* and *jolly* in our Sins, that all on a suddain we should be hurried away out of the Company of our *jovial* Associates, into that of *howling* and *tormented* Spirits, and from our *Songs* and *Laughter* into *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of Teeth*; how should we be *blanked* and *amazed*, and with what *Horror* and *Astonishment* should we reflect upon the *woful* Change, and upon our own *desperate* Folly that was the Cause of it? How dare we then talk of repenting *hereafter*, who cannot command one *Moment* of *future* Time, nor promise our selves one Day longer? when for all we know the hope of *Eternity* that is *now* in our hands may be lost *for ever*, and drop through our fingers before to *Morrow Morning*; and we that lie down this Night, and sleep securely in our Sins, may before the next *Twilight* awake with Horror and Amazement in *Hell*? Blessed God! that ever any *reasonable* Creatures should be so stupified, to venture a *Soul* and an *everlasting* Interest on so *great* an Uncertainty, and rather than begin his Repentance to day, run the hazard of being *eternally* miserable to *Morrow Morning*! that he who will not trust his Gold one *hour* in the Possession of a Thief, nor his

his Life one *minute* within the reach of a Lions Paw, should abandon his *Soul* whole Months and Years together, to the Mercy of a Danger great enough to distract all the Wit of Mankind, did they but fully understand it ! Let us therefore consider that the *present* Time only is in our Power, and that as for the *future*, it is wholly in God's ; so that while we *defer* our Repentance to the *future*, we do as it were *cast* Lots for our *Souls*, and venture our *everlasting* Hopes upon a Contingency that is not in our Power to dispose of. For all we know, this may be the *Evening* of our *Day* of Tryal; and if it be, our *Life* and *Eternity* depends upon what we are now doing. Wherefore it highly concerns us, as we regard our own Safety, wisely to manage this last Stake, the *winning* or *losing* whereof, may prove our *making* or *undoing*.

3. Every *Delay* of our Repentance endangers the *forfeiture* of that Grace, without the Assistance whereof, we can never repent to purpose. For we can no more repent without God's Grace, than we can live without our Food. *No man can come to me, saith our Saviour, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* Joh, 6. 44. But since God hath promised, that if we *draw near to him* he will *draw near unto us.* Jam, 4. 8. that if we *work out our own Salvation, he will work*

in us to will, and to do, Philip. 2. 12. and that he will give the holy Spirit unto every one that asks him, Luke 11. 23. Since I say, God hath thus intailed his Grace upon our Endeavours, Repentance is within our Power, so long as that Grace is so ; by which, if we do our Endeavour, we shall be enabled to it. He who can repent by the Grace of God, is able to repent so long as he is able to obtain his Grace to assist and concur with his Endeavours ; but if he once withdraw his Grace, and give us over to our own Hearts Lusts, then are we no more able to repent by our own natural Strength and Power, than a Clod of Earth is to mount up to Heaven, and fix it self a glorious Star in the Firmament: But all the time we do delay our Repentance, we are wearying out the Grace of God, which whilst we are running away from God and our Duty, follows us with Importunities to return ; but instead of complying with it, we still defer to listen to its Solicitations, and put it off from time to time with false and empty Promises, what can be expected but that after so many defeats and disappointments it should at last abandon us to our selves, and leave us to the miserable Fate of our own Folly and Madness ; and if once it doth so, farewell to all the Hopes of our Recovery. Consider therefore, O thou vain Man, that sayst thou wilt
repent

repent *hereafter*; must thou command God to wait thy leisure, or fasten his Grace with such *adamantine* Chains as that it should never be able to get loose from thee? art thou sure it will be always at thy Beck, or that notwithstanding thy long Provocations, it will be ready to come to thy aid whensoever thou callest for its Assistance? for by promising to repent *hereafter*, thou dost not only promise for thy self, but for the Grace of God too, whose Assistance is as necessary to thy Repentance, as thy own Endeavour; and methinks 'tis a strange piece of Confidence in thee, to promise for that which thou hast so much disobliged, and which upon that account thou hast so little reason to trust to. 'Tis true God hath promised you his Grace, but I beseech you, where hath he promised that you shall have it when you please? or that after all his Tenders, and your scornful Refusal of it, it shall be still at your Choice whether you will at last accept of, or again refuse it? for unless you can produce some such Promise as this, you can have no reason to expect that God will still continue his Grace to you, how long soever you refuse and reject it: And if he should at last deal by you, as you have dealt by him, this will be the *final* Issue, because when he hath called, you have refused, when he hath stretched out his hand,

you have not regard, but have set all his Counsels at naught, and would not hearken to his Importunities ; therefore when you call, he will not answer, when you seek, he will not be found ; but will even laugh at your Necessity, and mock when your *last* Extremity comes upon you. And should things be reduc'd once to this *sad* Issue, *woe* be to us that ever we were born.

4. And lastly, Every Delay of our Repentance drives nearer to the *last* Extremity, which is that of a *Death-bed* Repentance ; and how great a one that is, I have already shewed you at large, and given you evident Proof, that tho' it be not absolutely desperate, yet it is most fearfully hazardous and comfortless ; and yet this is the common Center to which all our *Delays* do naturally tend. We venture to sin on, because we know that if we do repent, God will have Mercy upon us, and so we do resolve upon both ; that is to sin *now*, and to repent *hereafter*. And by this Train the Devil touts us on through all the Stages of Sin and Life, till we come to our *Death-bed*, and then when our Time and Strength is spent, we shall have all the Business of our Life to do, and being reduc'd to this Extremity, what a woful Condition shall we be in ? when we shall feel our selves departing into a long Eternity of *Weal* or *Woe*, and have nothing

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to bear us company thither, but our Sins and Guilts, which, if they be not cancelled in an instant, will *consign* us immediately to *endless* Misery; and whether we look either within, without, or above us, shall be able to see nothing but a black and dismal Cloud hanging over us, and Causes of Fear surrounding us on every side; how will our Heart *sink* within us, and our Soul *quiver* on our Lips to think how *naked* and *harbourless* she is left, having no other Refuge to fly to, now the *Avengers* of Blood are at her heels, but only that *wronged* and *affronted* Mercy which all her Life time she spurned and trampled on? When we shall consider what a vast Work we have to do, how little Time we have to do it in, how our own Strength is spent, and what little Reason we have to expect that God should strengthen us by a Miracle; in what a Tumult will our Souls be? how shall we quake and tremble to think whither we are going? and what will become of us for ever? Surely if we die in our Wits, and are not *Atheists* or *Sots*, it will be impossible for us to reflect on our selves and the fearful *Risque* we are running, without extream Horror and Amazement. For we must be strangely stupified, if when we perceive our selves upon the *Confines* of *Eternity*, within a very few Moments of being Happy or Miserable for

ever, we do not awake from our Security; and if we do, the vastness of the Work that lies upon our Hands, the number of the Guilts that will *stare* us in the Face, and the little Time and Power we have to perform the *one* and expiate the *other*, must needs put our *guilty* Consciences into a fearful Agony, and *unchain*, and let *loose* all its Terrors upon us : And then how miserable will our Condition be, when we shall look about for Comfort, and see nothing but God's *everlasting* Threats ready to be fired and discharged upon us, and not one Promise opening a Door of Hope, nor any *Arm* of Mercy held forth to catch us now we are leaping down into *Eternity*; but *Hell* gaping for us as wide as our *Grave*, and both ready to receive a part of us, and our selves ready to divide our selves into those Two *sad* Habitations. O then shall we sigh and lament our *Folly*, and curse our *lingring* Delays, and wish a Thousand and a Thousand Times we had begun our Repentance sooner. This is the *sad* Extremity whereunto we are driving in every *Delay* of our Repentance; and considering all these Things, methinks these mighty Dangers whereunto our *Delays* expose us, should be enough to frighten the most resolute Sinner into *present* purposes of Amendment. And O would to God, that this might be the happy Effect
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of it ! that Men at last would be but so wise as to consider these things, how *monstrously* Wicked, how *shamefully* Absurd, how *fearfully* Dangerous it is for them to put off their Repentance; and that considering this they would be so kind to themselves as now at last to betake themselves to the Discipline of a severe Repentance. This I know is a Word that Men are extream frightened at, they think if once they betake themselves to Repentance, they must encounter with *vast* Difficulties, and enter into a very *dolorous* and *unpleasant* Course of Life, which while they can live merrily in their Sins, they are very loath to do. And indeed I cannot deny, but after an *habitual* Course of Sin, our Entrance into a *penitent* Life, will in all probability, be attended with a great deal of Sorrow and Disquiet, but who can help this ? it is you that have brought this Inconvenience on your selves by deferring your Repentance so long ; and assure your selves, the longer you defer it, the more difficult it will be whenever you begin. But for God's sake consider *Sirs*, which do you think will be more uneasy, to undergo the Severities of Repentance *for a Time*, or Hell Fire *for ever* ; to weep for your Sins whilst you have Hope of Mercy, to contest against them whilst you have a Prospect of Victory ; or sigh and groan for them to all

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Eternity, without any hope of Ease or Redemption; for whether you will or no, you must endure Repentance or Hell; and therefore since there is no other Remedy, at least be persuaded to choose that which is most tolerable, and if you do so, I am sure you must conclude, that 'tis infinitely easier to repent, than to be damned. But yet it is plain, that Men do commonly fancy Repentance to be much more grievous than it is; for could they once persuade themselves to resolve upon the Work, and seriously to engage in it, they would find the greatest part of the Trouble were over; for the main Difficulty of Repentance, lies in forming our first Resolution; this indeed will exact great *Consideration*, and vigorous *Strugling* with the wicked *Habits* and *Inclinations* of our own Natures; but when we have so far overcome our selves, as to obtain a full and clear Consent and Resolution, we have past the *main* brunt of our *spiritual* Warfare, and if we have but the Courage to keep our Ground, shall soon be crowned with the Joys of Victory, and that which seem'd at first so frightful, and terrible to us, will presently grow tolerable, and soon after easie, and after that by degrees so pleasant and delightful, that we shall prefer it before all the Pleasures of Sense, and feel our selves infinitely more
blessed

blest and happy in it, than ever we were in the midst of the highest Ravishments of our sinful Delights. Come then, my Brethren, let us stand no longer *amusing* our selves with the Difficulties, but let us seriously consider the *indispensible* necessity of it, the great Assistance God hath promised us if we will *speedily* undertake it, and the *immense* Rewards he proffers to encourage us to it, and let us never leave pressing our selves with these *Considerations*, till we have obtained of our selves a full and free consent to it, and wrought our Wills into a *serious* and *heartly* Resolution. And when we have prevailed thus far, we have gotten over the greatest *Difficulty* that lies between us and *Heaven*, and if we do but vigorously pursue our Resolution, our Work will every day grow *easier* and *easier*, and so at last it will be our Recreation, and we shall reap from it so much *Peace* of Conscience, so much *Joy* in the Holy Ghost, such a calm and sweet Enjoyment of our selves, and such a glorious Hope of a *future* blessed Immortality, as will carry us with unspeakable Vigour through all the weary Stages of our Duty, till we are arrived to our Journeys end, where all the *Sorrows* of our Repentance shall be *swallowed* up in *everlasting* Joys and Triumphs.

LUKE

LUKE XXII. 42.

Nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done.

TH E S E Words are a Part of our Saviour's Prayer in his Agony ; in which his Soul being at present under a *mighty* Contest with the Powers of *Darkness*, and under a *vigorous* Apprehension of his approaching Passion on the Cross, expresses an *earnest*, but yet *natural* and *innocent* Desire of Deliverance ; *Father, if thou be willing, saith he, remove this Cup from me.* For his *Humanity* being now in a great measure deprived of the Supports and *comfortable* Influence of his *Divinity*, and left alone to grapple by its own *single* Strength, with the *powerful* Malice of Men and Devils, and being under a *piercing* Sense of those *mighty* Evils they intended against him, began to *recoil* and *shrink*, out of a *natural* desire to preserve it self ; but yet this *natural* desire being perfectly under the Government of his Reason, and that as perfectly under the Government of God, He does to this Effect address himself to God, *Father, if it be thy Will, remove this Cup away from me.* I do not desire in the least to controul or cross thy blessed Will in any thing, no, rather than thou shouldst suffer the least Disappointment.

pointment in thy blessed Intentions, I am ready to undergo the utmost that the Malice of Men and Devils can inflict upon me; but alas! the Evils that I feel and fear are so exceeding grievous unto Flesh and Blood, that if it might be without Contradiction to thy Will, or Prejudice to thy gracious Intentions to a sinful World, I cannot but earnestly desire that they might be removed from me. But if there be any the least Competition between thy Designs and my Desires, so that they do not fairly agree, and perfectly consist with one another, whatsoever I endure, not my Will, but thine be done.

Behold here a most perfect Pattern of Submission to the Will of God, and that under the most dismal and difficult Circumstances. When he plainly saw it was the Will of his Father to expose him to the utmost Extremity of humane Misery, to object his naked Breast to the utmost Malice of Men and Devils; when, by the Force of a most powerful Instinct, his Nature recoiled at the Apprehension of it, and would fain have been excused; then did he supplicate on his bended Knees, that his Father would not listen to the innocent Language of his natural Fears and Desires, but that he would fully execute his own severe and terrible Will upon him; not my Will, O Father, i. e. not the Will of my natural Fear and Desire of Self-preservation, but thy Will be done; though it be to in-

flict

flit on me the utmost Misery that a poor Innocent, as I am, can be exposed to. The Words being thus explained, do naturally resolve themselves into this Proposition.

That God's *Choices* for us, are much better than *our own*, and consequently, that if it were in *our Power* to determine which of the *Two* should take Effect, it would be very *unreasonable* not to choose what *God* hath chose for us.

The Truth of which will evidently appear if we consider these Two Things.

1. That *God* doth as really and heartily will what is *Good* for us, as we do for our selves.
2. That he knows much better what is *Good* for us than we.

1. That *God* doth as really and heartily Will what is *Good* for us, as we do for our selves; *i. e.* So long as we are *proper* Objects of his *good* Will, and have not sinned our selves into an *utter* Incapacity of being beloved by him; for then the Case quite alters, and that *good* Will which he formerly bore us, converts into a *severe* Resolution of making us *dreadful* Examples to others, that so when through our own *Obstinacy* and *Incorrigibleness* he can do no more good upon us, he may do good to *others* by us, and warn them not to imitate our Actions by the *fearful* Example of our Sufferings.

But

But so long as there is any Hope of doing good upon us, he declares himself as *heartily* inclined to do good to us, as ever any Man was to do good to himself; for what *mighty* Designs hath he set on foot? What *expensive* Methods hath he used to save us? in what *passionate* Strains hath he expressed his *good* Will towards us, and with what *restless* Importunity doth he court us to be happy? He swears by his *own* Life, that he desires not our Ruine, but rather that we should *return* and *live*, and solemnly professes, *that he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.* And when with *all* his Courtships and Addresses he cannot prevail upon our Obstinacy, to dissuade us from ruining our selves, he puts on the Passions of a *mournful* Friend, and with *yearning* Bowels laments our *fatal* Folly; by all which *tender* Expressions he plainly declares, that he doth as heartily *will* our Welfare as we can do our own. But because a *firm* Belief of this Principle is indispensibly necessary to a *free* Submission to his *heavenly* Will, I shall endeavour briefly to demonstrate the Truth of it from these *Four* Considerations.

1. That *his* Interest in us is much *greater* than *ours* in our selves.
2. That his own *Self-love* doth as strongly

ly incline him to *will* our *Good*, as *ours* doth to *will* our own.

3. That in concerning himself about us, he can have no *other* End to serve, than what we have in being concern'd for our selves.

4. That even that *good* Will that we bear to our selves, is only a Derivation from, and Participation of that infinite *good* Will which he bears us.

1. That *his* Interest in us is much *greater* than *ours* in our selves. If we believe *him* to be the Author of our *Beings*, we must acknowledge him to have a most *absolute* and *unalienable* Propriety in us; that what we are, as well as what we have, we hold from him who is the *Head-Landlord* and *Supream Proprietor* of all those *Beings* that are derived from him, even as *Brooks* and *Rivulets* owe all their Streams to the Fountain from whence they flow. And can we imagin him not to be *greatly* concern'd for what he hath so *great* an Interest in? or that he who hath so much *greater* Propriety in us, should have *less* Regard for us than we have for our selves? Can it be thought that the *great* Father of *Beings*, should be forgetful of his own *Off-spring*? that he who hath imprinted on all other Parents such a *tender* Kindness toward their *natural* Issue, should be so regardless of his *own*, as to expose them to a
wide

wide WilderNESS, and leave them *there* to shift for themselves? no, doubtless the *migh-*ty Interest he hath in us cannot but *indear* his Affections to us, and render him *migh-*tily concern'd for our welfare. *Can the Mo-*ther forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee saith the Lord. Isai. 49. 14. For since every thing is *naturally* inclined to love its own, we cannot but conclude that the God of Na-
ture, from whom all *natural* Inclinations spring, hath in himself a most *tender* Regard for all that Family of Beings, of which he is the Parent; especially considering

2. That *his* own Self-love doth as strong-ly incline him to *will* our Good, as *ours* doth to *will* our own. For if he love him-
self as he cannot *but* do, being infinitely lovely; he must necessarily love what is like him, and affect to propagate his own Resem-
blance. But no *miserable* Thing can be like himself, who is *infinitely* happy; and there-
fore he cannot love to make *others* misera-
ble, since in so doing, he must affect to pro-
duce what is contrary to himself, which im-
plies a *plain* Contradiction. For unless he
love our Misery, he cannot be *supposed* to
desire it, because as I shall shew you by and
by, himself can never be the better for it,
and therefore if he desire it, it must be for

its own sake. But how is it possible that the same *Being* should love Contraries at the same time ; that he should at once take Delight in himself, and in what is most unlike him, or, which is the same thing, that he should be pleased with his own *Happiness* and with our *Misery* together. So that if he love himself who is *infinitely* happy, his own *Self-love* must necessarily incline him to *will* the *Happiness* of others ; and unless our *Happiness* might be supposed to be prejudicial to his, which is impossible, it would be an Expression of Hatred to himself to wish *ill* to his *Creatures*. In his willing *Misery* in us, he would manifest himself to be *displeased* with his own *Happiness*, and *openly* declare that *Misery* was much more grateful to him ; for how can he love *Misery* for it self, as he must needs do, if he take Pleasure in ours, and at the same time love himself who is so *infinitely* happy ? This therefore we may build upon, with as much Confidence, as upon any *first Principle* in *Philosophy*, that God hath the same Reason to *will* our *Happiness*, as we have to *will* our own ; that as we would be happy, because we love our selves ; so because he loves himself, he would have us be so. He loves that others should be like him, even as every other *Being* doth that loves ; for what he loves in *himself*, he must love in *another*, and that which he loves

loves in *another* where it is, he must love to propagate to *another* where it is not; and consequently, as he must love our *Happiness*, because he loves his own, even so for the same Reason he must love to make us happy.

3. That in concerning himself about us, he can have no *other* End to serve, but what we have in being concern'd for our selves. He is so *infinitely* happy in himself, that he can neither conceive nor desire any *Good* for himself, beyond what is contain'd within the *Immensify* of his own *Being* and *Perfections*; so that now he can have no *Self-ends* to serve, because he doth already enjoy all *possible* Degrees of Perfection and Happiness, and so can desire nothing without himself as an Addition to his own Beatitude, which is so *infinite* already that it will admit of *no* Increase. From hence therefore we may be assured that *he* can have no *other* Reason to concern himself about us, but only to do us *Good*, for to do us *Mischief* cannot be his End, because he can do himself no *Good* by it, his *Happiness* being already so compleat, that it cannot possibly need our *Misery* either to increase, or to serve as a *Foil* to it. 'Tis only *Want* and *Indigence* that make *one* Being desire the *Misery* of *another*. If I desire to rob *another* of his *Happiness*, 'tis to increase or to secure my own; if I desire to make *another* miserable, 'tis either to preserve my

self from being so, or to procure my self that *ill-natur'd* Comfort of having a *Companion* in Misery. But God by the *boundless* Happiness of his Nature, is infinitely raised above all such *mean* Considerations, and therefore cannot have any Temptation in his Nature to do *any* Thing but *Good* to his Creatures. But doth not the *Scripture* tell us, *that he doth all things for his own Glory*, and that he obtains *this* End as well by *punishing* as by *rewarding* his Creatures? Very true, but then it is to be considered, that the *Glory* he aims at, consists not in receiving of any *Good* from us, but in doing and communicating of all *Good* to us: For *infinite* Goodness can no otherwise be *glorified* than by its *own* Overflowings, and free Communications, and it can no otherwise be *glorified* in the Punishment of its Creatures, but only as it doth *Good* by it; for should it punish without *good* Reason, it would reproach and vilifie it self; but if it doth it for *good* Reason, it must be because it is *good* either for it *self* or *others*: for it *self* it cannot be; for how can an *infinitely* happy Being reap any *Good* from *another's* Misery? and therefore it must be for the good of others, either to reduce *those* who are punished, or to warn *others* by their Example from running away from their Duty and Happiness. So that to do *Good*, is the End of God's Punish-

Punishment, and because it is so, he is *glorified* by it; and considering that he is so *infinitely* happy, that he can no ways serve himself by our Miseries, it is impossible he should have any other End in concerning *himself* about us, but only that *great* and *God-like* one of doing us good, and making us happy. For the very Notion of an End includes *Good*; and therefore since the End of God's Concern about us, cannot be his *own* Good, it must necessarily be *ours*.

4. And lastly, That even that *good* Will that we bear to our selves, is only a Derivation from, and Participation of that *infinite* good Will which God bears us. For it is plain, that our *natural* Instincts, and Propensions, must be derived from the *same* Fountain with our Natures, and consequently that God is the *Author* of both; and if so, then that *unquenchable* Self-love, and Thirst after Happiness, which is implanted in *our* Natures, must needs be derived from him, and owe its *Original* to some *overflowing* Spring of Love and Benevolence in his Bosom. For what should move him so to contrive the Frame of our Natures, as that we cannot but love our selves and breath after our own Happiness, but only his own *good* Will to us, and *tender* Care of our Happiness? What *other* End could he propose to himself, in stamping this *vehement* Propen-

sion in our Natures, *only* to excite us by it to be careful of our selves, and to pursue our *own* Interests? Doubtless if he had not loved us *more* than we love our selves, he would never have caused us to love our selves as we do since he could have no other aim in causing us to do so, but only to oblige us to *befriend* our selves, and contribute all we are able to our own Welfare. And since it was out of *mere* Love to us that he made us to love our selves, and our *own* self-love is nothing else but a *Ray* and *Participation* of his Benevolence towards us, we may be sure it is *purser* in the Fountain than it can be in the Channel, that it is much more *intense* and *vigorous* in his Bosom than in our own. For as the *natural* Love of all Parents towards their *Off-spring* is a plain Instance of the *indulgent* Care which the *great Father* of Beings hath for *all* his Children, that he hath committed them in their Infancy to such *tender* Nurses as will be sure to take care of them when they cannot provide for themselves ; that he hath not intrusted them to the Compassion and *good* Nuture of other Beings, to be maintained by the Alms and Benevolence of their *fellow Creatures*, but hath taken security for their *liberal* Nature and Education from the *inmost* Bowels of their Parents ; so that *vehement* Propension of Self-love which
God

God hath implanted in us is a most *genuine* Signature and Impression of his Benevolence towards us, and shews how careful he was of us thus to take security of our selves for our *own* Welfare, and to oblige us to be happy by the most *tender* and *vigorous* Passion in our Natures. By all these considerations I think it is as clear as the Sun that God doth heartily love us, and hath as *unfeigned* a *good-Will* for us, as we can have for our selves; so that unless we can suppose that we are better able to chuse for our selves than he, we have at least as much Reason to acquiesce in *his* Choices for us as in our *own*. It is plain he is as much our Friend as our selves, and therefore tho' what he *wills* and *chooses* for us may in some particulars appear very *harsh* and *severe*, yet that his Intention is *good*, and that he means as well towards us as we can towards our selves; and therefore if in the Event it prove not as well for us as our *own* contrary Will and Choice would have done, we may be sure that it was not want of *good* Will to us, but for want of Skill to choose what was best for us. But if it appear that he doth not only wish as *well* to us as we do to our selves, but also that he knows how to choose for us a great deal *better* than we, then we have all the Reason in the world to acquiesce in his Choices how *grievous* soever

they may appear to us, and to joyn heartily with our *Saviour* in this *excellent* Petition, *not our wills, O Father, but thy Will be done.* Which brings me to

2. The second general Head of discourse, that as God hath as *good* a Will to us as we have to our selves, so he knows much *better* what is *Good* for us than we. And to prove the Truth of this it is sufficient that God *infinitely* exceeds us in Knowledge and Understanding, he being *Omniscient*, and having all Things before him in one *intire* View and Prospect, whereas *we see but in part, and know but in part*, and are extremely *shallow* and *superficial* in our Conceptions of those Things that lye before us, which must necessarily render us *infinitely* less capable of judging what is *Good* for our selves than he. And this will more plainly appear by *particular* Instances, of which I shall only produce these five:

1. That we many times know only what is *Good* for our selves *singly*, but God knows what is *Good* for us as we are *Parts* of the *Whole*, and in *Conjunction* with it.
2. We many times know only what is *Good* for us with respect to such a *particular* End, but God knows what is *Good* for us in the *main*.

3. We

3. We many times know only *this* or *that* to be *Good* for us *singly* and *apart* by it self, but God knows whether it be *Good* for us in *Conjunction* with those *Concomitants* and *Consequents* that are necessary to it.
4. We many times know only what is *Good* for us in respect to our *present* Temper and Disposition, but God knows what is *Good* for us in Reference to our *constant* and most *abiding* Disposition.
5. We many times know what is *Good* for us with respect to this *present* State of Things, but God knows what is *Good* for us in Reference to our *eternal* Condition. In all which Instances I doubt not to make it appear that God is much fitter to choose for us, than we for our selves.
1. That we many times know only what is *Good* for our selves *singly*, but God knows what is good for us as we are *Parts* of the *Whole*, and in *Conjunction* with it. Man is naturally a *sociable* Creature, and as *such* can never be happy alone. His Musick is always best in *Consort*; when it consists of *numerous* Voices, every one bears a Part with every one. And since our Nature is such, as that we are not comparably so well pleased with *solitary* as with *sociable* Fruitions,

ons, it is every *single* Mans Interest that his own *private* Good should not be separated from the Good of the *Whole* ; that it should not grow like a *Wen* by ingrossing the Nourishment that is due to all the *other* Parts, but rise and increase in such *just* Proportions as is consistent with the Happiness of all the Rest : and there is no man whatsoever that hath the *least* Spark of Generosity in him, but to contribute to a *Publick* Good would joyfully submit to a great many *private* Inconveniences, and would reckon his own *personal* Dammage fairly compensated by the Advantage that the *Publick* receives by it. But so *narrow* and *confined* is our Prospect of things, that in our *private* Choices we many times ignorantly separate our own Interest from the *Publick's*, and choose *that* for *our selves*, which, should we obtain, would *prove* very *injurious* to the *Whole*. We would fain change our *present* Condition for some *other* which we have Reason to believe would be much more advantageous to us ; but should we obtain our Desire, it may be the *Publick* would be much *more* injured by it, than *our selves* could be benefited. Perhaps we are fittest to do Good in our *present* Station, or, should we remove, some *unworthy* Person may get in in our Room, or *some* Person that is *more* *worthy* than our selves may be displaced by

us; and by a thousand other ways which we are not able to comprehend, our *shifting* of Places may so *puzzle* and *disorder* the *well-laid* scene of Affairs, that had we foreseen it at first we should much rather have chosen to keep where we are. Again, we lye under the sense or Apprehension of some *great* Calamity, and doubtless if we might *choose* for *our selves* we would immediately be delivered from it; but did we always *foresee* how much Good *others* may reap from our Sufferings, how much our *private* Infelicity may conduce to the *Weal* of the *Publick*, I hope we should not be such *narrow-spirited* Persons as for the sake of our *present* Ease to neglect so fair an Opportunity of being *publick* Benefactors to the World. But now God hath such an *intire* Prospect of all Things before him, that he plainly sees all the *little* Clashings and Interferings of Mens *private* with the *Publick* Good. And as he knows that we *cannot* be *happy* alone, so he resolves that we *shall* not; for he never wishes any Mans *private* Good separately from that of the *Publick*, but in one *steady* Drift he carries on the Interest of each *single* Part in Conjunction with the Interest of the Whole. And hence in the Prosecution of *single* Ends we see he is not always wont to proceed in the most *direct* and *compendious* Way, but often times winds about in a *large* Circuit,

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in which he infolds and takes in a thousand *concurrent* and *subordinate* Designs ; and drives them all at once before him in the *Course* and *Series* of his Providence. And tho' in this *general* Drift of Things, the Concerns of *particular* Men are sometimes set *forwards*, and sometimes *backwards*, in Pursuance of the *main* Design ; yet all at last conspires in the *publick Good*, whereof each *Particular* hath a share. And therefore tho' for a *publick Good* we sometimes suffer a *present* Inconvenience, yet since we cannot be *happy* but in Society, it is much *better* for us that we should be *dammaged* than the *Publick* ; because the Happiness of each *particular* Member redounds from the Welfare of the *whole* Society, and is necessarily involved in it : And did we but rightly understand our *own* Interest, we should never esteem any Thing *Good* for our selves that is a *Nuisance* to the *Publick*, because whatsoever *this* suffers, I and *every* Man suffer ; and unless I could be happy alone, *that* can never be for my Interest in *particular* that is against my Interest in *common*. Since therefore the Happiness of every *Part* is included in that of the *Whole*, and consequently whatsoever promotes the *Publick Good* is beneficial to each *particular* Member ; it hence necessarily follows that God can choose much better for us than we. For whereas

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generally our Foresight is limited within the narrow *Horizon* of our own *particular* Concerns, by reason whereof we cannot many times avoid choosing against the *common* Interest, God hath the whole *series* of Things before him, and so must necessarily see even from the Beginning to the End what is for the *publick* Interest and what not; and therefore since he who is *sole* Administrator of the *publick* Bank of *humane* Interest knows how to make the *best* Improvement of it, it is doubtless much *more* advantageous for us that he should manage all our *particular* Shares of it, then that we should reassume them into our own Hands, and manage them separately by themselves: And tho' under *his* Conduct and Management we suffer some *present* Inconveniences, yet so long as we are sure of *this*, that the *Publick Good* requires it and is promoted by it, we have all the Reason in the world to be satisfied. And this was the Case in the Text; the Inconvenience which our *blessed* Lord did *here* so earnestly deprecate was indispensibly necessary for the *Commonweal* of Men, in which himself had a large Share, being a *Member* of the *Corporation* of Mankind; so that had God granted his Desire, and excused him *that* bitter Cup he drank, not only Mankind in *general* but himself in *particular*, as he was a Man, would have been very much damnified by it; for he
would

would have been deprived of those *Felicities* which he *now* enjoys in *common* with us as he is the *Head* of a *glorious* Church, whom he redeemed and purchased with his Blood. He would have fallen *short* of that *Mediatorial* Dignity to which he is now advanced, and lost the Satisfaction of being the Author of our Happiness, and seeing the *blest* Fruits of the *Travail* of his Soul; by all which he hath been abundantly compensated for those *momentary* Sufferings he endured. So that in the Issue we see it was *well* for *him* as well as for *us* that the Will of God took place, his own *personal* Share in the *common* Happiness of Men being enough to recompense him a *thousand* Fold for whatsoever he suffered to procure it. Upon this Account therefore it is best that God should choose for us, because he always chooses what is *Good* for us in conjunction with the *Publick*, in the Prosperity whereof all our *particular* Welfare is involved.

2. We many times only know what is *Good* for us with respect to such a *particular* End, but God knows what is good for us in the *main*. The Generality of Men we see are *so rash* and *precipitant* in the Pursuit of their *particular* Ends, that they commonly overlook those Things that are of more *general* and *Catholick* Concern to them, and run themselves upon a *thousand* Inconveniencies for the
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sake of such *particular* Goods as can never
 make them any reasonable Amends. Thus in
 our *worldly* Affairs, how often do we indan-
 ger our *main* Interest by snatching *too* gree-
 dily at some *present* Good? We think if we
 had it, it would serve *such* a Purpose and con-
 duce to *such* a *desired* End; but when we have
 it, it proves a Mischief to us, and disappoints
 us of other Ends and Purposes which are of
 much *greater* Weight and Moment to us:
 And I believe there is no Man that hath been
 but a *diligent* Observer of his *own* Affairs,
 but hath found by Experience, that *many*
 of those Things which for *such* or *such* Pur-
 poses he hath earnestly coveted, have proved
 in the *main* extremely prejudicial to him;
 that either his *Health* or his *Estate*, his *Peace*
 or his *Reputation*, which are the main Ingre-
 dients of our *temporal* Welfare, hath been
 very much impaired by the Acquisition of
 some of those *Goods* which he hath most im-
 patiently longed for. And how often have
 we seen Men *impoverished* by those Pleasures,
disquieted by those Profits, made *infamous* by
 those Honours, and *unhealthful* by that Ease
 which they have doated on, and pursued
 with the greatest Impatience? So fond are
 we generally of our *little particular* Ends,
 that in the prosecution of them we seldom
 consult our *main* Interest! we consider only
 that *this* or *that* Good will serve *this* or *that*

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Purpose, and so we immediately let fly our Desires and Endeavours after that, without ever inquiring whether it will not be more *prejudicial* to us in general, than it can be beneficial in *this* or *that* particular; in which Case if we had but our own Wills, we should many times ruin our selves for Trifles, and sacrifice all the Happiness of our Lives to the *present* gratification of some *fond* and *unreasonable* Desire. But now God in the Conduct and Management of our Affairs considers our *whole* Case, and hath *all* our Circumstances together in his View, and so cannot but know whether *this* or *that* particular *Good* be consistent with our Welfare in the general; and whereas we, like Men in a *Fever*, do for our *present* Ease and Refreshment oftentimes long most impatiently for what is most *hurtful* and *injurious* to us, God, like a wise *Physitian*, consults our *future* Health more than our *present* Ease, and having an *infallible* Prospect of our *whole* Case and Circumstances, suits all his Prescriptions to the Necessities of our Condition; and not to the *blind* Impatiencies of our Appetites and Longings. He many times plainly sees that what we desire would be our *Bane*; and therefore out of *tender* Mercy chooses rather to deny us than to destroy us. That *Patient* would be accounted very *unreasonable* that should fall out with
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his *Physitian* for disturbing his sleep when he is inclining to a *Lethargy*, or denying him Drink in a *Fever* or a *Dropsy*; because tho' what he desires is *good* for those *particular* Ends of his present Ease and Refreshment, yet it is apparently *destructive* to him in the main. Thus doubtless it would have been very well for *Joseph*, as to many particular Ends, not to have been *sold* by his Brethren, or *imprisoned* in *Egypt*, and doubtless had it been left to *his* own Option, he would much rather have chosen to continue at Home under the Care and Patronage of an *indulgent* Father; but had he seen, as *God* did, from the *first* Link of the Chain of his Fate to the *last*, and how inseparably his *After-advancement* was connected to his *present* sufferings, in the Course and Series of Things; he would doubtless have willingly chosen as *God* did for him, since tho' the *contrary* had been well for him in some particulars, yet *this* was much better in the general.

3. We many times know only *this* or *that* to be good for us *singly* and *apart* by it self, but *God* knows whether it be good for us in Conjunction with those *Concomitants* and *Consequents* that in the Course of Things are necessary to it. For the *divine* Providence, which runs thro' all Things, hath disposed and connected them into such a *Series* and
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Order, that there is no *single* Event or Accident, (but what is purely *miraculous*) that depends not on the *Whole*, and hath *innumerable* Causes antecedent to it, *innumerable* Concurrances going hand in hand with it, and *innumerable* Consequents attending it. But so narrow and *confined* is our prospect of Things, that we only see that part of their *Series* and Order that is at present before us; and there are *innumerable* Things both concomitant and consequent to every Event that are out of the *sphere* of our Cognizance; by Reason of which it is impossible for us to make any *infallible* Judgment either of the *good* or *evil* of almost any *Event* that befalls us; because, tho' we may be secure that such an Event *single* and *apart* by it self may be *good* or *evil* for us, yet for all we know, in the *whole* series of Things there be such *concomitant* or *consequent* Events inseparable to it, as may quite alter its Nature, and render *that* Evil which considered *singly* may be Good for us; or *that* good, which considered *singly* may be Evil. So that in our Choice of Events we are necessitated for the most part to choose in the *dark*, because we see *so* little of the *whole* Series of Things, and of the Circumstances wherewith Events are accompanied and attended, that it is not in our Power to determine which is *good* or which *bad* for us. We many times
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look on such an Event as *highly* good for us and *extremely* desirable, and believe that if we could compass it we should be *extremely* happy; but *poor*, *short-sighted* Creatures that we are! we *see* neither the Company, nor the Train of it. If *this* Event doth befall us, according to the Series of Things, a *thousand others* must, and what they will prove we are not able to *prognosticate*, and for all we know the Mischief of *them* may abundantly outweigh the Benefit of *this*; and did we but foresee all that goes along with and all that must follow it, we should be many times *most* afraid of what we *most* eagerly desire. This therefore being our Case, how extremely unfit are we to make Choices for our selves, since it is almost an *equal Lay* whether what we choose will prove our *Food* or our *Poison*. But God being the *supreme* Orderer and Disposer of things, must needs have them altogether *intirely* in his View; and having the first Link of the whole Chain of Causes in his own Hands cannot but plainly see all the *intermediate* ones from the Beginning to the End. And since his *Power* is the Cause not only of all *actual* Events but even of the Possibility of those that shall never be actual, he must needs discern the *utmost* Issues of every *possible* as well as *actual* Event, and see the *remotest* Effects and Consequents that are in the *Wombs* of all *actual* and *possible* Causes

and Principles; and having all Things that *are*, or that may *be* in his View, he doth not only see what is *good* or *hurtful* to us, but what would be so if it were *actual* and *existing*. So that He needs not try Experiments upon us to know what is *beneficial* or *injurious* to us, because the Operation and Consequence of every *possible* Event is as obvious to his *all-comprehending* Knowledge *before* as *after* it is befallen us. And hence it is impossible for him to be mistaken in his Choices; because he knows as well before hand what Things would *be* if they were, as what they *are* when they actually exist. And tho' we may sometimes pervert the Nature of Things by our Abuse of them, and make that *Evil* to us which is really *Good*; yet *God* cannot be mistaken so as to prescribe us for *Physick* what is in its own Nature *Poison*; and consequently if he love us but as *well* as we love our selves, as I have demonstrated he doth, he must needs choose better for us than *we*; because he sees the *utmost* Consequents of all that doth or can befall us, and so cannot be imposed on by shews and *false* Appearances as we often times are. And of this I shall only give you one Instance, which is that of good old *Jacob* when he lost his Son *Joseph*, which we plainly see by the Sorrow he expressed as it was an Accident that happened *fore* against his Will, and which he
would

would have gladly prevented had he been but aware of it. But it is plain the *good* Man saw but a *little* way into the Series of Things; he saw his Loss, but he saw not the *Issues* of it, for doubtless had he beheld that Train of *happy* Consequents that was *chained* and *annexed* to it, how it tended not only to *Joseph's* Advancement but to the Preservation of *himself* and *his* Family from the *ensuing* Famin, he would doubtless have been more a Friend to *himself* and a Father to *his* Family than to have *countervoted* God in his Choice and Election for him. But it was well for *Jacob* that *God* saw farther into the Consequents of Things than he; for if he had not, not only *Joseph* had missed of his Preferment, but *himself* and all *his* Family had been in a great *deal* of Danger of *perishing* in the Famin. So that when all is done, you see the *wisest* Course we can take is to *resign* up our selves into the Hands of *God*, who seeing the *utmost* Issues and Consequents of Things can never be mistaken in choosing what is *best* for us.

4. We many times know only what is *Good* for us with respect to our *present* Temper and Disposition, but *God* knows what is *good* for us in Reference to our *constant* and most *abiding* Condition. We are a Sort of Creatures that are extremely *fickle* and *immutable*, our Humours change upon every *new* Occasion, and our Desires, like

the *Weather-cocks* look *contrary* Ways upon every *contrary* Wind; now we are of one Mind, and by and by of another; this seems to us *now*, and anon the quite *contrary*, and often times in the *same* Hour we are *several* Sorts of Men. But still we choose according to our *present* Temper, and so still as *this* alters, our *later* Choices thwart and run a Tilt at our *former*. So that should every Thing happen to us that we desire and wish for, we should be the most *miserable* Creatures in the World, since what we choose in *this* Hour we should reject in the *next*, and what we longed for *to Day* we should be sick of *to Morrow*. And since no Man certainly knows *now* what mind he shall be of *anon*, for all that he can tell, *that* which is most agreeable to him *now* may be most disagreeable to him *then*, and if he should change his *present* Mind, as it is very likely he may, he will *immediately* unwish what he now wishes for, and *dearly* repent of what he most heartily chooses. How then is it possible that we should choose *well* and *wisely* for our selves, all whose Choices do depend on a Temper that is so everlastingly *fickle* and *variable*? But now God, who foresees what our most *constant*, *lasting*, and *durable* Temper will be, is much better able to *adapt* Events to it, and to contrive all our Circumstances into a *fair* Accommodation with it; and tho' it is impossible but he must sometimes

times cross us, because our *Humours* do so vary, and we do so *often* cross and contradict our selves; yet knowing best what our *standing* and *permanent* Temper will be, he must needs know best also what will be most *constantly* convenient for us and agreeable to us. For if he be *cordially* our Friend, as it is apparent he is, he will not so much consult the Gratification of our *peevish, fickle, and unconstant* Humours, as of our most *permanent* Temper and Disposition; and if he know much better than we what our most *permanent* Temper and Disposition will be, as it is apparent he doth, he must needs be much abler to suit and accommodate it with *convenient* Events and Circumstances. Of this you have a *remarkable* Instance in the *Method* of Gods conducting *Israel* out of *Egypt* into *Canaan*. Doubtless had *They* had their own Choice, they would have been *immediately* translated from their *miserable* Bondage into that *happy* Land; but God knew their *standing* Temper *better* than they did their own; he saw they were a *stupid, stubborn, and untractable* People, and as yet *wholly* incapable of such a *propitious* Change, and that if he had conducted them into *Canaan* directly and in a *Moment*, they would have presently forgot their Benefactor, and let loose themselves to all Licentiousness and Wickedness; which must have naturally shortened their Prosperity and halved it in-

to an *untimely* Ruin ; And therefore God saw it necessary to continue them some time longer in *Egypt*, that so by his *mighty* Works *there* he might awaken their *stupid* Minds into an *awful* Sense of his Majesty and Power. And when by his *outstretched* Arm he had brought them out of *Egypt*, he made them wander about *Forty Years* in the Wilderness ; whereas had he led them directly *on*, a very *few* Days Marches would have brought them into *Canaan*. But he considered their *stubborn* Temper which was not yet capable to bear a *prosperous* Condition, till it was thoroughly disciplined for it in the *School* of Affliction ; till it was *broken*, and *tamed*, and *civilized*, and rendered more tractable and obsequious. And tho' in *thus* Dealing with them, he acted quite contrary to their *present* Humour and Desires, yet did he act most advantageously for them, considering their *standing* Genius and Temper ; for had he transmitted them into *Canaan* with all those *barbarous* Conditions that they brought out of *Egypt*, their Prosperity would have only *heightned* their Insolence and hastned their Ruin : And accordingly *Deuter. 8.* *Moses* tells them at large, that all *Gods* Severities to them in the *Wilderness* were to dispose them for the *happy* condition of *Canaan* ; to *prove* and *polish* them, to *break* and *humble* their *untractable* Spirits, and do them good in the *latter* End ; as you may

see verse 2, 3, 5, 16. And if God choose to do what is best for us with respect to our *standing* Temper and Disposition, we have no reason to complain that he *sometimes* crosses our more *sickle* and *variable* Humours and Fancies.

5. And lastly, We many times know only what is *Good* for us with respect to this *present* State of Things, but God knows what is *good* for us in reference to our *eternal* Condition. For we being a Sort of Creatures that are born to live *for ever* in *eternal* Weal or Woe, it is really a Matter of very *small* Moment to us whether we are *happy* or *miserable* here; 'tis no more than a *short* Nights Dream of Pain or Pleasure to a Man that hath *fourscore* or a *hundred* years to consume in Delights or Torments; and when we *awake* in *Eternity* all that is past will seem a Dream to us in the Presence of those *never ending* Ages of *Joy* or *Misery* before us. But yet so *fond* are we generally of the *present*, that we most commonly choose without *any* Regard to the *future*. In our Choice of Objects we seldom project beyond our *present* Pleasure; if the Thing will but please us *now*, we rarely trouble our Heads to inquire what Influence it may have on our *eternal* Pleasure or Pain; yea, and many times if we should, it would be to no purpose; because in most of those

Goods

Goods we choose and covet there are a *thousand* Snares we cannot discern, as well as a *thousand* Advantages which we are not aware of. In those Evils and Calamities which we run *away* from, we are not able to *foresee* how many Ways our souls may be endangered by those *outward* Goods we covet, nor yet how many *spiritual* Blessings those *outward* Evils may be pregnant with at which we are so startled and affrighted: so that in most of *our* Choices we can look no farther than our *present* Convenience, but what Effect they may have upon our *everlasting* Fate we can never certainly know till the *Event* hath determined it. Thus in this *great Lottery* of *Goods* and *Evils* we *short-sighted* Creatures are fain to choose at a Venture, and till the *Event* hath determined what our Choices are, we know not whether they are *Blanks* or *Prizes*. So that if we always had what we choose, *God* only knows the Mischief that would follow upon it; for to be sure every Man would choose to be *prosperous*, and if every Man were so, how many *Thousands* would perish *for ever* for want of the *saving* Remedy of Affliction, which is as *indispensibly* necessary to the reclaiming of *some* Persons and putting them into a Capacity of Happiness, as *Food* is to satisfy our Hunger, or *Nourishment* to sustain our Lives. Lord! what
miserable

miserable Creatures then should we be, shouldst thou be so regardless of us to allow us our Wills, who having so *small* a Prospect beyond *this* State of Things should many times for the sake of a *present* Convenience choose what might occasion our *eternal* Woe? But God being our *best* Friend must needs be supposed to intend our *main* Interest, which being lodged in our *eternal* State, he must needs be much *more* concerned *about* than about our Happiness and Conveniences in this *present* Condition; nor indeed would he be our Friend should he advance our *present* Interest to the prejudice of our Souls and *immortal* Concerns. So that if he love us, as we are *most* sure he doth, the *main* Drift and Design of his Providence over us must be to secure our Happiness in the *World to come*; and when *this* cannot be secured but by the Damage of our *earthly* Enjoyments, it is Mercy and Kindness to us to fling that *Lumber* over-board to save our *precious* and *immortal* Freight. But he having a most *perfect* Intuition of the *inmost* Nature and *utmost* Consequents of Things, cannot but discern all those Stops and Turnings where our *temporal* and *eternal* Interest do clash and interfere with one *another*; and having a *perfect* insight of all their Competitions, where the *one* cannot be advanced without the Depression of the *other*,

other, he must needs know *infinitely* better than we how to prefer our *main* Interest, and to choose what is best for us. For he knowing *best* what our Temper is, and what the Consequents of things are cannot be ignorant of what is *best* for us and most *conducive* to our *eternal* Interest; whether *Prosperity* or *Adversity* be *safest* for our Souls, and most for the Security of our *Vertue* and *Innocence*; and knowing this he can so accommodate *all* Events to our *spiritual* Necessities, as that they shall *all* work together for our *eternal* Good. And if at any time he sees it *necessary* for our *spiritual* Good to *instruct* us by Rods, or to *discipline* us by Affliction, it is *infinite* Mercy in him to cross our *blind* Wills by interrupting our *beloved* Ease and Prosperity. And if we saw but what he sees when he corrects and chastises us, and knew the Reasons of his Actions; we would doubtless beseech him to do as he doth, and whilst we were *smarting* under his Lashes, we should be *adoring* his Goodness for making such *wise* Provision for our Welfare. Thus when *David* was hunted like a *Partridge* on the Mountains by those *successive* Afflictions which God let fly at him, he doubtless concluded him self to be very severely dealt with, and would God but have allowed him to choose his *own* Fate, he would much rather have chosen to have lived

in

in an *uninterrupted* Calm of Prosperity, than to be exposed, as he was, to the *incessant* Storms of an *adverse* Fortune. But when Experience had better instructed him what were the Reasons of *God's* Actions, how necessary they were to *correct* his Follies, and *curb* the Extravagancies of his Nature; he was then plainly convinced that *God* had dealt much better by him; than he would have dealt by himself; and was forced to acknowledge that it was *well* for him that he was afflicted; *for before I was afflicted, faith he, I went astray; But now have I kept thy Commandments.* Psal. 119. 67.

So that by all these Instances you plainly see that *God* can choose much *better* for us than we for our selves, and therefore if to *this* you add what hath been so largely proved, that he is as *heartily* our Friend as we can be our own, it will from hence *necessari-ly* follow that it is much *better* for us, that *his* Will concerning us would take Effect, than any *contrary* Will or Desire of *our own*.

What then remains, but that with all Chearfulness and Alacrity we resign up our selves into the Hands of *God*, and submit *all* our Choices and Desires to his *heavenly* Will; *who* having as *unfeigned* an Affection for us, as we can have for our selves, and a much *better* Prospect of our Affairs than *we*; must needs manage our Concerns to much

greater

greater Advantage than it is possible for us to do. Why then should we murmur and repine at any thing that befalls us? are we wiser than God? no; or can we pretend to be more careful of our Interest than he is? neither. In the Name of Goodness, what would we be at then? Would we have him resign up our Concerns to our selves, and not intermeddle any farther in our Affairs? God forbid, that either he should have so little Regard of us, or that we should be such Traytors to our own Interest. For on this side Hell I know nothing more formidable than for God to let us alone, and give us up to our own Wills and Desires. And if I should hear him thus bespeaking me from the Battlements of Heaven, O foolish Creature, since what I do will not please thee, and thou art so dissatisfied with my Conduct and Management, from henceforth I will cross thy Desires no more, but let the Event prove good or bad, I will comply with thy Choices, and order all things to happen to thee according to thy own Will: I think I should look on my self as the most forlorn and abandoned Wretch on this side Hell, as one utterly excluded from the greatest Blessing that belongs to a Creature; and if I had any Hope of his Reacceptance, I would on my bended Knees resign back my self, and all that concerns me into his Hands again. I would beseech him
above

above *all* things not to leave me to my *self*,
not to *throw* me from *his* Care, or *discharge*
me from *his* Conduct; and if I could pre-
vail with him to take me *again* into *his* Care
and Protection, I would promise *never* to
repine against him more, but *cheerfully*
submit to his *heavenly* Will how severely so-
ever he should think good to deal with me.
And this not only I, but every Man else
would do, that truly loves *himself*, and un-
derstands his own Interest, for *where* can
our Concerns be *better* or *safer* lodged, than
in the Hands of that *infinite* Wisdom that
knows what is *best* for us, and that *infinite*
Goodness that wills what it knows *best*,
and of that *infinite* Power that doth what it
wills? Why then should *any* Man be displea-
sed that *his* Affairs are not managed *his own*
way, when we are so sure of *this*, that they
are managed by One that hath much *more*
Skill to manage them than we; and One
that having the *same* Love for us that we
have for our selves, will be sure to manage
them to the *best* Advantage? And since there
is the same *Benevolence* towards us in God's
Will, that there is in *ours* towards our selves,
how much *better* is it for us that *his* should
take Effect that is guided by such an *infalli-
ble* Wisdom, than *ours* that hath nothing to
conduct and *steer* it but a *blind* Sense, or at
best, a *short-sighted* Reason. Wherefore tho'

our Affairs go never so contrary to our Wills in this *present* State of Things, yet this we may build upon, that it is *best* that Things should be as *God* will have them. And as when we are grown *up* to the Age of Men, we thank our Parents for those *loving* Severities they Exercised towards us when we were Children, and not *able* to govern our selves; because *then* we see, that if they had let us had *our* Childish Wills, and given the Reins to our *wild* Passions and Appetites, we should in all Probability have undone our selves: so when we come to our *full* Stature in Christ, and are grown *up* into a State of Perfection, then we shall see Reason to *admire* and *praise* the Goodness of *God* for those *merciful* Denials and *kind* Severities, upon the Account of which we *now* murmur and repine against him; and be fully convinced that it was *happy* for us, that we were not suffer'd to be *our* own Carvers, but had all *our* Allowances carved out to us by the *wise* and *gratious* Providence of our *heavenly* Father. Whensoever therefore we are crossed by *his* Providence in any of *our* Desires, let us but consider how *unfeignedly* he loves us, and how *much* more fit *he* is to chuse for us than *we*, and then we shall see *infinite* Reason to acquiesce in his Providence, and to joyn with our Saviour in this *excellen*, Prayer, *Father, not our Wills, but thy Will be done.*

MATTHEW XVI. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.

IN the 21. Verse our Saviour declares to his Disciples, that it was necessary for him to go up to Jerusalem, and there to suffer many things, and to be killed, and be raised again the third Day. Upon which St. Peter rebukes him v. 22. saying, *be it far from thee, or as it may be render'd, be propitious to thy self; this shall not be unto thee.* But Jesus considering that this was the Work he came into the World for, tartly rebukes him, *get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* i. e. thou talk'st as if thou didst not yet understand what God hath foretold of me, viz. that I shall be advanced to my Kingdom by my Sufferings, and as if thou wer't meerly guided by Rules of humane Policy; according to which, to expose ones self to Calamities and Death, is a very odd way to Glory and Empire. But I tell thee, Peter, that it is not only certain that I must suffer

in order to my Advancement, but that those also that will *come after me*, must *deny themselves, and take up their Cross and follow me*. In the management of which Words, I shall endeavour these Three Things;

1. To shew you what is here meant by *denying our selves*.
2. What *abundant Cause and Reason* there is for it.
3. How absolutely *necessary* it is to our *eternal Happiness*.

1. What is here meant by *denying our selves*. In general, by *our selves* here we are not to understand our Nature, considered as it is the Creature and Workmanship of God; for God hath endowed us with *rational Faculties*, and stamp'd *immutable Principles of Reason* upon our Minds; which Principles we are *so far* from being obliged to renounce, that they are the *fundamental Laws* of our Nature, by which we ought to regulate all our *Motions and Actions*. By *our selves* therefore we are to understand *our sinful selves*, or our *corrupt Nature* as it is under the Power and Dominion of *wicked Principles and Inclinations*; for so *our selves* doth in Scripture many times denote *our sinful and corrupt selves*. And so *2 Tim. 3. 2*. 'tis made a Character of *bad Men*, that *they should be lovers of their own selves*; whereas in themselves to *love our selves* is *so far* from being

ng a Fault, that it is a *necessary* Instinct of Nature, and the Root and Principle of our *Virtue*. By loving *our own selves*, therefore must be here meant, being *indulgent* to the *vicious* Inclinations of our Nature, as he explains himself in the following Words, *being Covetous, Boasters, Proud, Blasphemers, &c.* And accordingly Christ is said to have *died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves; i. e. to their corrupt Principles and Inclinations; but unto him which died for them, 2 Cor. 5. 15.* By *our selves* therefore here we are to understand every thing in us that is opposite to God, every Motion and Inclination of *our Nature* that stands in Competition with *his Will*, and doth *any way* contend with *his Authority*. For the *Soul of Man* is a Throne to which *God* and its *corrupt Nature* are Rivals; *God* claims it by a *natural and essential Right*, as he is the *Sovereign of Beings*, and the *Lord of the Creation*; *Corrupt Nature* claims it without any *Pretence of Right*, but like a *bare-fac'd Usurper* derives its Propriety from its Possession, and *will rule*, because it will, and because it hath got Strength and Interest enough to *support* its Dominion. So that to deny *our selves*, is to renounce our *corrupt Nature*, and to refuse to be governed by it, and wholly to resign up *our selves* to the Government of God; to aban-

don those *evil* Inclinations which are God's Competitors in us, and would *countermand* his Will, and *usurp* his Dominion. In a Word, to deny *our selves*, is to give away *our selves* from *our selves* to God, to put all our Powers of Action out of *our own* Disposal into God's, and not to suffer *any* Desire or Inclination of *our own* to take Place of *his* Will, or prevail against *his* Authority. And therefore as they are said to *deny God* who reject his Authority in Compliance with the *corrupt* Inclinations of their Nature, *Tit. i. 16.* so they may be truly said to deny *themselves*, who refuse to gratifie those their *vicious* Inclinations in Compliance with the Will of God. In short therefore, to *deny our selves*, is to prefer God's Will before our own, to *sacrifice* our Inclinations to our Duty, and in all Competitions between *him* and *our Carnal* Interests and Affections to take *his* Part, and follow his Command and Directions.

2. I proceed to the Second Thing proposed, which is to shew you what *abundant* Reason there is for *this* Duty ; and this will evidently appear if we consider seriously how much *more* advantagious it is in all respects, for Men to be ruled by God, than by *themselves* ; to follow *his* Will, and comply with *his* Pleasure, rather than give up *our selves* to the Government of his Rival, viz. the Appetites and Inclinations of our
own

own *corrupt* Nature; which will evidently appear in these following Particulars.

1. By thus denying *our own* Will in Compliance with the Will of God, we shall *choose* and *act* with much more *Ease* and *Freedom*.

2. We shall *choose* and *act* with much more *Evenness* and *Consistency*.

3. We shall *choose* and *act* with much more *Peace* and *Satisfaction*.

4. We shall *choose* and *act* with much more *Prudence* and *Conduct*.

5. We shall *choose* and *act* with much more *Security* of the *Event*.

1. By denying *our own* Will to comply with God's, we shall *choose* and *act* with much more *Ease* and *Freedom*. He that makes *his own* Will his Law, is upon every new Occasion put upon new Deliberations, and upon every Change of Circumstances is fain to change his Will, and to consult new Choices and Resolutions; in debating of which, he is commonly so *mac'd* and *un-
milder'd* with *cross* Thoughts, and *opposite* Counsels and Deliberations, that he hardly knows which way to determin himself, and is *more* at a loss what to resolve upon, than how to execute his Resolution. And being thus *clogg'd* and *incumber'd* in the whole Course of his Motion, how is it possible he should *act* with any *Ease* and *Freedom*? But

now when once a Man hath renounced *his own Will*, and intirely submitted himself to the Direction of *God's*, he is *free* from this Toil and Incumbrance. For the Will of *God* as to all the *material* Parts of our Duty is so plainly revealed, that an *honest* Mind with *little* Enquiry may be *soon* informed, and satisfied about it ; and when once it is *so*, all its Choices are already determined, so far as they are concern'd in the Matter of its Duty ; for *God's* Will being *his*, he no sooner knows *that*, but he rests in it immediately with a *free* Assent, and *uncontrouled* Approbation, and whatsoever the *Event* be, he is fixed to one *steady* Course of Motion, being resolved *once* for all, whatever happens, to do as *God* would have him. So that when once a Man hath intirely denied *himself*, and put himself out of *his own* Disposal into *God's*, *God* chuses for him, and thereby frees him from *all* the Trouble of doubting, and deliberating, and disputing *pro and con*, of being distracted between *contrary* Reasons, and bandied *to and fro* by *cross* and *opposite* Importunities. For now his Soul acquiescing in *God*, as in its *proper* Place and Element, doth *no more* dispute, *no longer* waver between *Two* Load-stones, but being *unison* with *God*, resounds and eccho's to *his* Will, and freely follows him without heliberation.

2. By

2. By denying *our own* Will to comply with God's, we shall *choose* and *act* with more Evenness and Consistency. For so long as Men live in *Subjection* to the Principles and Inclinations of their *corrupt* Nature, 'tis impossible they should *act* evenly and consistently with themselves ; for our *corrupt* Nature is wholly governed by the *Goods* and *Evils* that are without us, and without our Power and Disposal ; by *Gain* and *Loss*, by *Ease* and *Pain*, by *Applause* and *Disgrace* ; and therefore *all* its Pleasures and Displeasures must be as *Casual* and *Contingent* as the *Goods* and *Evils* are from whence they do arise. And whilst we are governed by such *casual* Things as these, we are not *our own* Men, but do live in *Subjection* to a *foreign* Power, and must be what these Things that govern us will have us ; we must turn as the *Wind* blows, and like *Water* take our *Form* from the Vessels we are poured into. And while the Passions and Appetites that *over-rule* us are thus *over-ruled* by the Chances and Contingencies without us, we must of necessity be as *various*, as *fickle*, and as *multiform* as they ; we must put on as many Humors as Fortune doth Countenances, and shift *our* Pleasures and Displeasures upon every Turn of *her* Wheel ; in a word, we must be as *various*, *inconsistent*, and *contradictory to our selves*, as the Chances and Acci-

dents are that do befall us. Now what a *wretched* State is this, for a Man to be never the same, but be continually *wreathing* and *distorting* his Humour into all the *antick* Figures of his *outward* Condition, which change and vary almost every *Moment*? Doubtless *that* Man will find enough to do, that shall undertake to *make Faces* after an *Ape*, but he will find a great deal more that will needs be *aping* an *inconstant* Fortune through all its *Grimaces* and Changes of Countenance.

But now he that hath thoroughly learned to deny *himself*, and to submit intirely to the Government of God, is *all* of a Piece, and throughout *even* and *constant* with himself. He is for the main, the *same* Man when he *loses* as when he *gains*, when he is *reproached*, as when he is *applauded*; and the reason is, because he governs *himself* not by the *uncertain* Contingencies that are *without* him, but by the *immutable* Will that is *above* him; and while he doth so, he knows that his Happiness is as much above the reach of the *impotent* Malice of Fortune and Men, as the *Moon* is above the Noise of those *impertinent* Curs that sit yelping and barking at her from below. And being under the Command of *one* Rule, which is the Will of God, and *one* End which is the Enjoyment of God, he goes evenly on in a *calm* and

composed Current of Action through *all* the Changes and Vicissitudes without him; and *all* his Motions and Designs, Choices and Prosecutions continue as *uniform* and *consistent* with themselves in the midst of the *various* Contingencies of this World as the *Sovereign* Will is that commands and determines them.

3. By denying *our own* Will to comply with *Gods*, we shall *choote* and *act* with much more Peace and Satisfaction. So long as a Man governs himself by the Appetites and Inclinations of his *corrupt* Nature, 'tis impossible he should ever be satisfied with *himself*; for besides that *his own* Reason will reproach and upbraid him with the *natural* Filthiness and Turpitude of his Actions, and represent them to *himself* as *shameful* and *inglorious*; besides which, I say his own Conscience will be *ever* and *anon* vexing and plaguing him with *anxious* and *unquiet* Thoughts and Reflections. For God hath imprinted a *Dread* of *his own* Power and Majesty so *deep* upon our Natures, that with *all* our Arts we are not able to deface and obliterate it; and tho' for *some* time perhaps we may suppress and stupify it, yet in despite of *our selves*, it will *first* or *last* return again upon us, and avenge the Affronts and Violences we have offered it. Whilst therefore a Man sides with his *corrupt* Nature against
God,

God, it is impossible he should be *thoroughly* satisfied with himself ; for either *his* Reason will be upbraiding him with the filthiness of his Actions, or *his* Conscience will be alarming him with the Vengeance that is due to them.

But when once a Man hath *thoroughly* denied *his own* Will and Affections, and intirely resign'd *up* himself to the Government of God, he will be able to produce God's *own* Will and Command for the Warrant of his Choices and Actions ; and this will effectually discharge him at the *Tribunals* of *his* Reason and Conscience. For *why* should *our* Reason shame, or *our* Conscience terrifie us, so long as we *choose* and *act* in Subordination to God? or so long as we do *thus*, our Will and Actions are *his*, and being cloath'd in the *Livery* of *his* Authority, are thereby sufficiently protected both from *Shame* and *Fear*. For *why* should I be ashamed to do as God wills me, whom I know to be the *Standard* of all Perfection? or *why* should I be afraid to do as God wills me, whose Will is so intirely *righteous* and *good*, that I am sure it can never be displealing to *his* Nature? Whilst therefore I *choose* and *act* in Submission to God, what should hinder me from being as *courageous* as Truth, and as *confident* as Innocence it self? for so long my Conscience must not only *acquit* me, but

reverence me. So that now my Soul which heretofore lived in *Thunders*, and *Lightnings*, and *Storms*, will dwell above in a *serene Æther*, and there breathe nothing but *calm* and *gentle Thoughts*; and instead of those *uneasie* Reflections that were wont to disturb my *pleasant* Scenes of Mirth, I shall be continually entertained with the *silent* Melodies of a *clear* Conscience, and crowned with the Applauses of *my own* Mind.

4. By denying *our own* Will to comply with God's, we shall *choose* and *act* with much more Prudence and Conduct. Did we understand either God or *our selves*, we could not *but* be sensible that it is much more for *our* Interest to be governed by *his* Will, than by *our own*; for tho' there is no doubt, but we wish *well* to our selves, and would not wilfully prejudice *our own* Interest; yet it is to be considered, that there is the *same* Benevolence towards us in God's Will; besides which, God's Will hath an *infinite* Wisdom to steer by, which sees through *all* the Intrigues of our Interest, and hath an *intire* Prospect of whatsoever can *hinder* or *advance* it. Whereas *our* Wills are generally guided either by a *blind* Sense, or by a *short-sighted* Reason that many times mistakes our Interest, and directs us to *Rocks* instead of *Harbors*. And when the Disadvantage on *this* side is so *great* and *apparent*, how can we
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imagine our selves so *safe* under the Govern-
 ment of *our own* Wills, as we are under the
 Government of *God's*? He would have us
 do *this*? and we would do the *quite con-*
trary; and yet we acknowledge *his* Will is
 as *kind* and *benign* to us, as *ours* is to *our*
selves. Why then, which of the *Two* Wills
 do we think is the *Wiseſt*? *God's* ſure we
 will all acknowledge. Is it not then
 much *ſafer* for us to take the *Sun* for our
 Guide, than to *grope* by the *twinkling* Light
 of a *Glow-worm*? While we follow *our own*
 Will, every Step, for all we know, may
 plunge us into *Bogs* and *Quagmires*; but
 while we follow *God's*, we *chooſe* as wiſely
 for our ſelves, as an *infinite* Wiſdom can
 direct us. So that what *our* Will chooſes
 may be good for us, but what *his* Will choo-
 ſes muſt be ſo; and therefore to be ſure
 when ever we *chooſe* contrary to *him*, we
 chooſe againſt *our own* Interelt. I am as
 confident of this, as of any *Principle* in Na-
 ture and Religion, that whatſoever *God*
 commands me to do, he muſt certainly
 know that it is for my *Good*, and that is the
 Reason why he commands it; and if it be,
 then this I am equally ſure of, that whenſo-
 ever I *act* contrary to *his* Command, I run
 from a *certain* Benefit, to a *certain* Miſchief.
 But while I *ſubmit* my Will to *God's*, I am
 guided by *God's* Wiſdom, and in every

genuine Act of Obedience, I am as *infallible* as *Omniſcience* it ſelf. Whilſt therfore I am in the *Exerciſe* of my Duty, I am ſure I am *ſafe*; becauſe I am under the Direction of a Will that can never be *miſled*, and ſo can never *miſlead* me. And had *any* Thing he commands been *hurtful* to me, I know he is *ſo good* that he would never have enjoyned it; yea, had *any* Thing been but *indifferent* to me, I know he is *ſo wiſe* that he would never have concern'd himſelf or me about it. And if he hath commanded me nothing that is either *hurtful* or *indifferent* to me, it is doubtleſs *richly* worth my while to obey him even in the *ſmalleſt* and moſt *inconſiderable* Inſtances.

What a *mighty* Advantage therefore have thoſe *happy* Perſons who have intirely re-nounced *their own* Wills, and ſubmitted themſelves to God's? for whilſt others, *poor Wretches*! do grope about under the Conduct of *their own* blind Wills, and do they know not *what*, and go they know not *whither* themſelves, but *live* by Chance and *act* at Random; They are conducted in all their Choices and Actions by an *all-wiſe* Will that never fails to meaſure their Actions by the *beſt* Rules, and point them to the *beſt* Ends. So that while they move by the Directions of that *heavenly* Guide, they are ſure of their Ends, and do know infallibly before hand, that

that *all* their Choices and Actions shall finally conspire in *their own* Happiness.

5. And lastly, By denying *our own* Wills, to comply with God's we shall *choose* and *act* with much more *security* of the Event. One of the great Causes why Mens Minds are so *unquiet* and *anxious*, is, that they are not able to discover the *Events* of *their own* Designs and Actions, and it is *this* that makes them so *doubtful* and *tremulous* in their Motions, and Causes them to *act* with so much Caution and Anxiety; because they are not able to *pry* into those *hidden* Events that lurk in the *Womb* of their Designs. Now while Men give up themselves to follow the Inclinations of *their own corrupt* Nature, they cannot but be fearful of *all* Consequents, especially when they consider, that the Consequents of their Actions are in the hands of God, against whom they are in Rebellion. For our Understanding being our *leading* Faculty, and the Eye that is to direct *our* Practice, it is impossible that whilst *that* doth either disapprove or doubt of our Actions, we should ever be able to *act* with Steadiness, and Assurance: For while a Man *acts* with a *misgiving* Mind, and that which should be the Guide of his Actions is dissatisfied with his Way, he walks like a *benighted* Traveller in a dangerous Road, and is fain to *feel out* his Steps, and tread cautiously, lest he

he should stumble into a Bog, or a Precipice. Whilst therefore a Man knows that his Actions are *displeasing* to God, and considers that the *Events* of them are in God's hands, he must be very *unreasonable* if he expect to be *blessed*, and *prospered* in them; he must either conclude, that God's Displeasure is nothing but a *dead* and *imfectual* Passion, or that his way of *expressing* it, is by *smiles* and *Endearments*. So that whilst we take part with our *corrupt* Nature against God, we can never have any *rational* Security of the *Events* of our Actions, but must see *abundant* Cause, if we do not wilfully shut our Eyes, to be afraid of *every* Thing that happens to us; because *nothing* can happen to us, but by *his* Disposal whom we daily incense and provoke by our Actions.

But now he who hath sincerely resigned up himself to God, knows enough of the *Events* of *his own* Actions to set his Heart at Rest, and keep his Mind in a *quiet* Enjoyment of it self; for he acts with the *full* Consent and Approbation of his Mind, and hath no *by-ways* from the Road of his Reason and Conscience; but keeping straight forwards, as he doth in the *plain* Tracts of *eternal* Goodness, he treads firmly and boldly, being *secure* of the Ground he goes upon, and is neither *ashamed* nor *afraid* of *his own* Acti-

Actions; which being such as his *best* and *purest* Reason approves, have the *cheerful* *Euges* and Applauses of his Conscience continually *ecchoing* and *resounding* after them. And when a Man is well satisfied that his Ways are pleasing to God, he may cheerfully expect, that the *End* and *Events* of them will be *blessed* and *prosperous*; he may build upon it, that God will *first* or *last* express the Pleasure he takes in his Actions, by crowning them with a *happy* Success, and that how *grievous* soever any *present* Event of his *righteous* Actions may be, yet there is a great deal of Righteousness in it; because it proceeds from the *righteous* Lord, who loveth *Righteousness*; and that in the winding up of the Bottom, that which now seems most *grievous*, will be found most *beneficial* to him. For suppose I had an *infallible* Physitian, whom I know to be my Friend, constantly attending on me, and ordering my *Diet*, my *Physick*, and my *Exercise*; how *securely* should I live, and how *cheerfully* should I follow all his Rules and Prescriptions! should he order me a *course* or a *distastful* Diet, I should thus conclude with my self; well I am sure *this* is for my Health, and how *nauseous* soever it be at present, I know I shall be the better for it as long as I live; and this would render it very *grateful* and *palatable*. Should he prescribe a *strong* and *painful* Purgative;

gative; I should *thus* conclude, well, this is to *remove* or *prevent* a Disease that will be much more *painful* than all the *present* Gripes and Twinges it gives me, and I am sure it will have its *Effect*, and set me perfectly at Ease within a very *few Moments*; and this Consideration would turn my *Pain* into *Pleasure*. In a Word, should he impose upon me a *toilsom* and *laborious* Exercise, I should resolve *thus* within my self; well, tho' I stretch and sweat for it *now*, I shall certainly be the better for it *anon*, and reap *many* Years Health and Vigour from my present Toil and Weariness; and this Reflection would *convert* a Drudgery into a Recreation. And yet this is the *real* Case of those Men, who have intirely denied *their own* Wills, to *choose* and *act* in subordination to God: For he is an *infallible* Physician, and they have made him *their* Friend by submitting themselves to him, and putting *their* Lives and Interests in his Hands; and therefore since as he is God, and their *Friend*, he cannot but know and design what is *good* for them, they have all the Security in the World, that every thing he orders them, shall conduce to their *good*, so long as they follow *his* Prescriptions, and that he will order them nothing, but what they would order for themselves, if they were but as *infallible* as he is, and did fulfil comprehend *all* his Reason; and in a word,

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that tho' *this* or *that* Event may be for the *present* very *troublesom* in its Operations, yet if they do not hinder the Effect of it by their own Irregularity, it shall certainly conduce to their *everlasting* Health and Happiness. And under *this* Perswasion, how chearfully may a Man bear *up* under all Events, and welcome the *worst* that can happen to him; for being secure of the *infallibility* of God's Skill, and of the *sincerity* of his Kindness to him, he hath *abundant* Reason to conclude, that since all Events are under God's Disposal, he will take Effectual Care, that nothing shall happen to him but what is for his *good*. For while his Will is subject to God's, his Condition is a Thousand Times more safe and secure than if God's Will were subject to his; because tho' there be the *same* Benevolence to him in *both*, yet *his* Will might mislead God's, but God's Will cannot mislead his.

And thus I have endeavoured to represent to you the *abundant* Advantages that do arise from *Self-denial*, *i. e.* from renouncing *our own corrupt* Will and Inclination, and intirely submitting *our selves* to the Will of God; which are such as, one would think, should prevail with any Man that doth but love *himself*, and sincerely respect *his own* Interest. For this is as *certain* a Truth, and as much confirmed by Experience, as any

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Maxim in Philosophy, that there is no state of *humane* Life in which a Man can be happy, whilst his own *corrupt* Will is his Law; nor none in which he can be *miserable*, whilst he is intirely *resigned* and *devoted* to the Will of God.

3. I now proceed to the *third* and *last* Thing proposed, which was to shew you how absolutely *necessary* it is to our *eternal* Happiness, that in Obedience to God, we should deny *our own* Will and *corrupt* inclinations; and this will evidently appear if we consider

1. That the *Disposal* of our Happiness is not in *our own* Will but God's.
2. That the *Standard* of our Perfection is not *our own* Will but God's.
3. That the *Conformity* of our Nature to our Happiness consists not in what *we* will, but in what *God* wills.
4. That the *essential* Acts and Ingredients of our Happiness, are not what *we* will but what *God* wills.
1. That the Disposal of our Happiness is not in *our own* Will, but in Gods. If we would be *everlastingly* Happy, we must comply with that *blessed* Will upon which our *everlasting* Happiness depends; and the Apostle assures us, that *eternal Life is the Gift of God*. If it were in our Power to support and defend our selves in a *blest* Existence

to all Eternity, we might with *some* Confidence set up for *independent Free-willers*, and live as we list; and after we have followed the Swing of *our own corrupt Inclinations* in *this* World, promise to our selves an *Eternity* of Happiness in the *other*: But alas, we are a sort of *poor precarious* Beings, that are beholding to God for *every* Breath we draw, and for *every* Moment of our *Existence* and *Duration*; and if he should withdraw from us the *vital* Influence of his Providence but for the *Twinkling* of an Eye, we should be so far from continuing *happy*, that we should vanish into nothing. And therefore if we intend to be happy *for ever*, it is necessary we should submit our selves to *his* Will, upon whom every *Moment* of our Being depends. For when merely by withdrawing his Arm from us, he can let us drop into *nothing* when he pleases, how can we hope, when we will not be ruled by him, to be upheld by him in a happy Being *for ever*? can we think that the *wise* and *holy* Governour of the World will be so regardless of *his own* Authority, as to *sustain* and *uphold* his Subjects in their Rebellions against him; unless it be with a design to reduce them, or to make them *everlasting* Monuments of his Vengeance? No, no; since our *Being* and *Well-being* doth *for ever* depend upon him, we may build upon it, that either he will

be obey'd by *us*, or that he will not so *uphold* us, as to encourage us in our Rebellion; and consequently, that if he doth *uphold* us *forever*, as he hath declared he will, it will be with a *dreadful* Purpose, *viz.* to continue us in an *everlasting* ill Being, and hang us up in Chains for *publick* Spectacles of his Vengeance, that all his Creation may take warning by us. Wherefore if we are resolved to adhere to *our own* Will in Opposition to God's, it is in vain for us to aspire after a *happy* Being *hereafter*, unless we can find some way to deprive God of the Disposal of it and secure it in *our own* Power. For so long as God remains the *sole* Arbitrator of our Fate, we must make *his* Will ours, or renounce all our Hopes of Happiness.

2. It is to be considered that the *Standard* of our Perfection is not *our own* Wills, but Gods. For the Faculties of every Nature being the Senses by which it *perceives* and *enjoys* its *own* Happiness, it is impossible we should ever enjoy a *perfect* Happiness so long as the Faculties by which we are to enjoy it are imperfect. Ours therefore being a *rational* Nature, all whose Motions are under the Direction of an *understanding*, and the Command of a *free* Will, is framed and designed for a *rational* Happiness; which it is as impossible for us perfectly to *enjoy* whilst our *rational* Faculties are out of Order, as it is

to perceive the Pleasures of *delicious* Meats, and Sounds, and Odours whilst the *Sensories* of our *Tast*, and *Smell*, and *Hearing* are discomposed and obstructed by any *bodily* Disorder. But now while we follow *our own Will* in Contadistinction to God's, our *rational Nature* is *all over* out of Tune; for whereas according to the *true Order* and *Constitution* of *our Nature*, our *Understanding* is to *guide* our *Will*, and our *Will* to command *all our Passions* and *Appetites*; so far forth as *our Will* swerves and defects from Gods, it goes *quite* counter to the Principles of its *own Reason* and understanding, and subjects it self to the Dominion of *those Passions* and *Appetites* which it ought to command; it *chooses* and *refuses* by the Inclination of its Affections, and not by the Directions of its Reason and Conscience; which is the reason of that *Civil War* there is between the Law in its *Mind* and the Law in its *Members*, that is between its Reason and Conscience, and its *corrupt Lusts* and *Inclinations*; because while its Will takes Part against *God*, it sides with its Lust against its Reason, and whilst it doth so, it will be so far from being *happy*, that it will be continually at War with its self, and its Will and its Conscience, will be perpetually clashing with *one another*. For so long as a Man goes against his Reason,, his Reason must necessarily go against him, and be continually reproaching

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and *upbraiding* him, and *vexing* his Mind with *severe* and *angry* Reflections. And how can a Man *enjoy* himself, whilst he is *thus* divided; or how can he *enjoy* the Happiness of a *rational* Nature, whilst he is *thus* divided from *his* Reason, and lives in *perpetual* Variance with it? A *Body* may as soon be at *Ease* whilst its Bones are *out* of Joint, as a *Soul* whilst its Faculties are *thus* broken and divided. If ever we would be *happy* with our Reason about us, we must be *all of a piece* with our Reason; that is, our Will must be *rational*, our Affections must be *rational*, and our Actions must be *rational*; if they are *not*, our Reason will be as much against *them* as they are against *it*, and so there will be an *everlasting* Broil and Mutiny within us. Till therefore we are *throughout* perfectly *rational*, that is, till *all* our Faculties are intirely *compliant* with our Reason, it is impossible we can *ever* be perfectly *happy*; and tho' we had power enough to defend our selves from all *hurtful* Impressions from *without*, and to ward off the Blows not only of *Devils* and *Men*, but even of *God* himself; yet so long as *our* Reason and *our* Will are at Variance, our Will will be a *spightful* Devil to us, and our Reason an *angry* God. So that while we are *imperfect*, you see, we cannot be *happy*, and while we follow *our own* Will against God, we cannot be perfect. For to follow God

and *Right Reason*, saith the Philosopher, *is the same thing*; and to *present our selves*, saith a far greater Author, *a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, is our reasonable service*, Rom. 12. 1. For the Will of God being invariably *determined* in all its Choices and Refusals, by the *infinite* Wisdom and Goodness of his Nature, must be the most perfectly *rational* Will in the World, and as *such*, the Standard and Pattern of all other Wills; and therefore so far as *our* Will doth deflect from *his*, it must necessarily be *imperfect* and *irrational*: But while I govern *my* Will by *his*, and do *choose* and *refuse* by *his* Commands and Prohibitions, I follow the Pattern of my Perfection; and while I follow *his* Will which is a most *perfect* Transcript of *his* Nature, I transcribe *his* Perfections into *my own*. For while I am *copying* his Will I am *imitating* his Nature, and while I am *imitating* his Nature I am *growing* into his Likeness and Resemblance: And when once my Will is all *god-like*, and its Affections and Inclinations are perfectly *conformable* to God's, then I am perfectly *rational*, and then shall be perfectly *happy*. For now as I resemble *God* in his Perfections, I shall resemble *him* in *his* self enjoyment; my Reason will be perfectly *satisfied* with my Will, even as God's Reason is with his; and my Nature will be a *fair* and *beautiful* Prospect to my Understanding, even

as God's Nature is to his. I shall contemplate *my own* Graces with a *transcendent* Pleasure and Delight, and while I *alternately* turn my Eyes upon God and *my self*, and compare *Grace* with *Grace*, and *Beauty* with *Beauty*, I shall feel, as he doth, a *Heaven* of Content and Joy springing *up* in my Bosom. Thus by denying *our own* Will, you see, and submitting to God's, which is the *Standard* of *our* Perfection, we naturally grow *up* into *Blessedness*; whereas by following *our own* Wills in Opposition to God's, we fatally sink *our* selves into *Wretchedness* and *Misery*.

3. It is also to be considered that the Conformity of our Nature to our Happiness consists not in what *we will*, but in what *God* wills. To make us *blessed* it is not only *necessary* that there should be *blisful* Objects for us to enjoy, but that our Minds should *agree* with and be *contempered* to them; for unless we are *affected* suitable to the *Worth* and *Excellency* of them, all the *Objects* of *Heaven* cannot make us *happy*. For as *Delicacies* are *grateful* only to *delicate* Palats, and *Musick* to *musical* Ears; so the *glorious* Entertainments of the *World to come* are a *Heaven* only to *heavenly* Minds; For to dwell with a *God* whom I do not *love*, and to be confined to a *Society* of *Spirits* whose *Temper* I am *averse* to; to be put upon Exercises against which I have an *Antipathy*, would be a *torment* instead of a *free* Enjoyment.

ment ; so that before ever *Heaven* can be a *Heaven* to *me*, my Mind must be *tuned* and *adapted* to its Joys and Beatitudes. And this is not to be effected by following *our own Will* but *Gods* ; for *our Will* as it stands in Opposition to *God's* is either a *sensual* or a *devilish* one, or both ; and 'tis either *Covetousness* or *Luxury* which are the *Lusts* of the *Flesh*, or *Pride* or *Malice* which are the *Lusts* of the *Spirit*, that sway and determine it in all its *Choices* and *Refusals* ; both which are as repugnant to the *heavenly* Enjoyments as *Light* is to *Darkness*, or *one* contrary to *another*. For between a *spiritual Heaven* and a *carnal Mind*, a *divine Heaven* and a *devilish Mind*, there is an *irreconcilable* Distance ; and for *such a Mind* to live happily upon *such a Heaven* is as impossible in the nature of the Thing as it is for a *hungry Wolf* to fill his Belly with *Syllogisms*, or to satisfy its Appetite upon a *Lecture of Philosophy*. Whilst therefore we give way to our *corrupt Will* and Inclination we do contract an *Antipathy* to *Heaven*, and do what in us lies to prepossess our own Minds with an *implacable Aversion* to all its Joys and Beatitudes. We take an *effectual Course* to *antidote* our Souls against *true Happiness*, and to secure our Minds from being ever touch'd and affected with the *divin* and *spiritual Pleasures* of the *World to come*. So
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that if we are still resolved to take part with our own *wicked* Will against God, we were best take our Pleasure while we may have it, while we live among these *sensitive* Enjoyments that suit with our *brutish* Appetites and Affections; for when we go hence into the *Spiritual World*, that will be like a *barren* Wilderness to us, where we shall find nothing to live upon, but be forced to pine away a *long* Eternity under a *desperate* Hunger and Dissatisfaction. But if we heartily resign up our selves to God, and prostrate our Wills to his, we shall thereby quickly acquire a *heavenly* Frame and Disposition. For the *proper* Business of all those Duties he requires at our hands is to *dress* and *prepare* our Souls for *Heaven*, and make us *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light*. 'Tis by these that he *carves* and *polishes* our Natures, cuts off the Roughnesses and Unevennesses of our Temper, and *squares* us into *fit Materials* for the *heavenly* Building. For *this is the Will of God*, saith the Apostle, *even our sanctification*, 1 Thess. 4. 3. That is the purging our Nature from all its *Aversion* and *Repugnancy* to the Blessedness of *Heaven*, and the inlaying it with all those *divine* Dispositions wherein our Conformity with *Heaven* consists; for so our Saviour explains it, *Jo. 12. 50*; *I know that his commandment is life everlasting*; that is, that

that what he commands, is the *Seed* and *Principle* of everlasting Blessedness: That it is the *Charity* and *Humility*, the *Righteousness* and *Temperance*, and *Self-resignation* which he commands, which do *attemper* our Minds to the *heavenly* State, and by which we are to *relish* the Joys and Pleasures of it for ever. For it is these *Virtues* that do *reconcile* our *Appetites* to *Heaven*, and without *these*, our Souls can *no more* relish the Joys of it, than our Palate can *Sweet-meats* while it is over-flowed with Gall. Unless therefore we will deny *our corrupt* Will and Affections, and submit our selves to God, it is *Nonsense* for us to talk of going to *Heaven*; for *Heaven* it self without a *heavenly* Disposition to relish it, is a *tasteless* and *insipid* Thing, and it is as possible to please a *blind* Man with the Beauty of Colours, and a *deaf* Man with a *Consort of Musick*, as to gratifie a *vicious* Mind with its *divine* and *spiritual* Enjoyments.

4. And lastly, It is to be considered, that the *essential* Acts and Ingredients of our Happiness are not what *we will*, but what God Wills. It is a *great* mistake, to imagine that the Happiness of Man consists in *external* Possessions, or in being seized of a great Plenty of *outward* Goods of any kind whatsoever; whether they be *earthly* or *heavenly*. It is not the possessing the *outward* Goods of
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this World, but the enjoying them that makes any Man *happy*; and if I had *all* the World in my Possession, no more of it could go into my Happiness than just what I enjoy; all the rest would *be* like the Possession of a *great* Mountain of Sand which I could neither eat, nor drink, nor apply to *any* of my Needs or Conveniencies: So that the Possession of *outward* goods is good only as it is in Order to the Enjoyment of them, abstracted from which, it is altogether *indifferent* whether I am possessed of them or no. But now 'tis by *our own* Actions that we do enjoy the Goods we are possessed of, by applying them to the Needs and Conveniencies of our Nature, and by the Content and Satisfaction we take in the Application. So that in short, our Happiness is not in the Goods that are *without* us, but in the Enjoyment of them that is *within* us; that is, in those Acts of Fruition, by which we *feel*, and *perceive* them. And thus if we were possessed of all those *outward* Goods that *Heaven* abounds with, they could signifie nothing to our Happiness, unless we had an *inward* Enjoyment of them, and by proper Acts of Fruition did *taste* and *perceive* their Beauty and Delightfulness. So that all the Happiness, you see that *Heaven* or *Earth* can afford us, is immediately lodged in *our own* Acts of Enjoyment, without which neither the Possession

session of *Wealth* and *Honour* upon Earth, nor of the *Presence* of *God*, and *Saints*, and *Angels in Heaven* can make us in the least degree happy. Since therefore *our Happiness* is so immediately lodg'd in *our own Acts*, it will hence necessarily follow, that *those Acts* by which the *Goods of Heaven* are to be enjoyed are the *Acts* of our *future Happiness*. Now the *chiefest Goods of Heaven*, being *God*, and *Saints*, and *Angels*, and *our Selves*, the *chiefest Happiness of Heaven* must consist in those *Acts* by which *God*, and *Saints*, and *Angels*, and *our Selves* are enjoyed; and by what *Acts* can these be enjoyed; but by *Godly*, *Saintly*, and *Angelical Ones*? 'Tis by *Worship* and *Contemplation*, by *Love* and *Imitation*, by *Dependance* and *Subjection* that *God* is to be enjoyed by us; 'tis by *Charity* and *Righteousness*, by *Modesty* and *Peaceableness*, by *Submission* and *Condescension* that *Saints* and *Angels* are to be enjoyed by us; 'tis by *Prudence* and *Moderation*, by *Fortitude*, *Temperance*, and *Humility*, that we *our selves* are to be enjoyed by us; And therefore if when we go into *Eternity*, we carry with us a *Mind* and *Will* *habituated* to these *beatifick Actions*. these *Acts* are the *Sum* and *Substance* of *God's Will* and *Law*. Whilst therefore we take *Part* with *our own Will* against *God's*, we act quite counter to *our own Happiness*, and go contrary to all the *Acts*.

Acts of our *heavenly* Fruition and Enjoyment. For that which God designs in all *his* Commands; is to *educate* and *train up* our Nature for *Heaven*, to *discipline* and *exercise* it in the *beatifical* Acts of the *heavenly* Life; that so when it is advanced from this *School of Probation*, to the *University of Happiness*, it may be *instructed* in the Language, and *naturalized* to the Exercise of it; that it may be *predisposed* and *habituated* to *Love* and *Dependance*, to *Charity* and *Righteousness*, and all those *beatifical* Acts by which *Heaven* is enjoyed. So that while we follow *his* Will, we are learning to enjoy *Heaven*, and perfecting our selves in the Acts of our *everlasting* Fruition; that so when we go from *hence* to take Possession of the *Goods above*, we may be perfectly vers'd in the Enjoyment of them, and have the Skill and Ability to make a *happy Use* of them for ever. Whereas on the contrary, while we follow *our own* corrupt Will and Inclinations, we do not only *not* learn these *blessed* Acts of Fruition, but we learn the quite contraries. Instead of learning to enjoy God by *Love* and *Adoration*, we learn how to divide our selves *eternally* from him, by contracting Enmity to him, and a *profane* Contempt of his Majesty. Instead of learning to enjoy *Saints* and *Angels* by *Charity* and *Righteousness*, we learn how to banish our selves from their *Society*, by

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contracting *malicious* and *dishonest* Inclinations; in a Word, instead of learning to enjoy *our selves* by *Humility* and *Temperance*, we learn how to be our own *Devils* and *Tormentors*, by contracting *Pride* and an *unlimited* Propension to *bodily Pleasures*; by which means we shall at last render our Nature not only *impotent*, but also *irreconcilable* to all those *blest* Acts of our *future Happiness*, and so utterly disable our selves from enjoying *Heaven*, that it would be a *real* Grievance to us to be forc'd to endure it. For when by *thus* following *my own wicked Will*, I have contracted a *deep* and *inveterate* Aversion to all those *beatifical* Acts by which *Heaven* is enjoyed, I have an *Antipathy* against *Heaven* in my Nature, and so long as *this* continues, *Heaven* must be a Torment to me instead of a Fruition; and if when I go from *hence* into *Eternity*, I should be admitted into *Heaven*, with this *prevailing* Aversion to the *beatifical* Acts of it; I should be so far from enjoying it, that I should loath it, and rather choose to *banish* my self from it *for ever*, than to be confined to a Condition so *unsuitable* to my Nature. Whilst therefore I am running from God after *my own Will*, I am running from *Heaven*, and if I do not stop the sonner, shall run my self to a Distance from it, as *immense* and
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irreconcilable as that which *separated* Dives from Abraham's Bosom.

And thus you see how indispensibly *necessary* upon all these Accounts *Self-denial* is, in order to our *future* Happiness. Hence then, let us all be persuaded to renounce our *corrupt* Will and Affections, and *resign* up our selves to the *Government* of God: And further to move you hereunto, I beseech you briefly to consider with me these Four Things.

1. That in its self, *this* is the most *just* and *equitable* Thing you can do.
2. That in *this* consists the *Life* and *Substance* of all your Religion.
3. That *this* is the *great* Hinge upon which your *Safety* and *Security* depends.
4. That in *this* you do the most *effectually* consult *your own* Interest.

1. That to deny *your own* Wills, and *resign up* your selves to the *Government* of God, is in it self the most *just* and *equitable* Thing you can do. For all *your* Powers and Faculties are Gods by an *unalienable* Right and Property; your Understanding is *his*, and your Will is *his*, and all your Powers of Action are the Births and Products of his *fruitful* Will, and *Almighty* Goodness. And if it be thus, we must *necessarily* be obliged to subject *our selves* to him, and *prostrate* our

Wills, and all our Powers of Action at *his* feet. If then we are *his*, as we must be if we are made by him, what have we to do to dispose of *our selves* contrary to his Will and Pleasure? with what Colour of *Justice* can I *choose* what He commands me to *refuse*, when my Power of choosing is *his*, and he hath a far more *undoubted* Right to it than I have to the Cloaths on my Back? when he is the *supream* Proprietor of *that* Will wherewith I choose, with what Conscience can I vote with it against him, or give away *any* of my Choices and Elections from him? What is this but to *embezzle* my Masters Goods, and *alienate* his Property from his Use and Service? Remember, O Man! in every *wicked* Choice that thou makest, thou givest away thy self from thy *right* Owner, and dost *sacrilegiously* rob God of the Fruits of his own Creation, and must one Day expect to render a *dreadful* Account to him for every Choice thou hast given away from him, and for every *Thought*, and *Word*, and *Action* which thou hast presumed to dispose of contrary to his Orders: For thou hast *no more* Right to give away *thy self*, or any of thy Choices and Actions from God, and canst *no more* justify thy self for so doing, than thou hast to sell away thy Landlords *Fee-simple*, or to entail *his Inheritance* on the Children. And before you make *too bold* with

with God's Property, or presume to dispose of his *Goods* at your Pleasure, you were best consider seriously whom you have to deal with; that you have not to do with a *Being* that is to be *hector'd out* of his Rights, or born down with Might and Violence; but with a *God* that is sufficiently sensible of your *unjust* Usurpations, and abundantly *able* to revenge them; that is *jealous* of *his own* Rights and Properties, has a *deep* Resentment of all your *injurious* Invasions of them, and an *Almighty Arm* to assert and vindicate them. And when you have considered this, then alienate your *Choices* from him if you *dare*; but in the mean Time, as you will answer the Injustice of it at the *Tribunal* of *God*, have a Care how you dispose of *your selves* contrary to his Orders, lest as a *just* Retribution he should one Day dispose of you contrary to your *Wills* to *everlasting* Misery and Despair.

2. Consider that in *this* denying and resigning *our selves* to God, consists the Life and Substance of *all* our Religion. For what is Religion, but a *Religation*, a *Tying* or *Binding* fast Mens Minds and Wills to God? It is the Bond of our *Allegiance* to the *Throne* of *Heaven*, by which, we oblige *our selves* to be God's *Subjects*, and do resign up our Wills, and all our Powers of *Action* to his Government; and in this, as I shew'd you,

consists Self-denial. For when once we have master'd *our own Self-Will*, and conquer'd its Obstinacy, and persuaded it to yield up it self to the Will of *God*, then is his *glorious* Empire set up in our Souls, then he is crowned our *Sovereign* Lord, his Kingdom is come into us, and we may cry! *Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.* But till once our Religion hath tied our Souls to *God*, and obliged our Will to renounce all other *Lords*, and submit to his Empire, it is only a Name, an *empty* Shew and Formality of Religion; 'tis a Religion without a Religion, or a Bond without a Tye; that is, 'tis *down right* Nonsense, and a Contradiction to it self. And what Shews or Professions *soever* we may make of Religion, how *zealous* or *forward* *soever* we may be in the *external* Acts of it, it will all signifie nothing to us, unless there be a *prostrate* Will, and a *resigned* Heart at the bottom. For this is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *Corner* and the *Top-Stone* of Religion, and to pretend Religion without this, is to pretend *Loyalty* in open Acts of Rebellion. And indeed could Religion consist with a *rebellious* Will, the *Devil* himself might very fairly pretend to it; for that which makes him a *Devil*, is nothing but *his own boisterous Self-Will* that is continually struggling and lifting up it self against *God*. And hence
Belial

Belial is the Devil's Name, which signifies without Yoak; and accordingly the Children of *Belial* are described to be such, as do altogether break the Yoak, and burst the Bonds of the Lord, Jer. 5. 5. and called Children of Disobedience, Eph. 2. 2. because like their Father *Belial* they are impatient of Restraint, and will hearken to no Law but that of their own *boundless Self-will*. So far are those Men from being truly Religious, whose Wills are divided from God's, that they are in *Belial's Predicament*, unyoak'd from the Divine Government, and their Wills are in a *strict Confederacy* with the Devil. And hence the Prophet *Samuel* speaking of *Saul's Rebellion* against God, tells him, that *Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft*, 1 Sam. 15. 23. that is, Rebellion against God, is an *implicite Confederacy* with the Devil, even as *Witchcraft* is an *implicite* one. For the Devil being the Prince and Ring-leader of the Rebel-Creation, whoever sets up his Will against God, doest thereby renounce his *Allegiance to Heaven*, and like a *false Recreant* joyns hands with the Devil in Rebellion against his Maker. And whilst a Man's Soul doth thus clasp Wills with the Devil, and conspires with him in his Rebellion against Heaven; what *impudent Hypocrisie* is it for him to pretend to Religion? Wherefore, either let us be so *modest* for the future

as not to pretend to Religion, or any of those *blessed* Hopes it sets before us; or let us resolve to be so *honest* to our Pretensions as to *deny* our selves, and *resign up* our Wills to God. For while our Will and God's are divided and separated, and do in any Instance tread *Antipodes* to *each other*, all our Pretence of Religion is a *shameless* Cheat, which when it comes to be examined at the *Tribunal* of God, will be found a *meer* Paint, and *artificial* Completion dawb'd upon a *black* and *devilish* Nature.

3. Consider that upon our denying *our selves* and resigning our Wills to God, depends all *our* Safety and Security. For if God be against us, all the Powers of *Heaven* and *Earth* can't secure us; because *his* Will hath an *infinite* Power conjoyned with it, that like an *irresistible* Torrent bears down *all* Oppositions, and sweeps every Thing before it that stands in its way. To what purpose then should such *impotent* Things as we, set up *our* Wills against *his*? Can you ever hope to prevail against *him*, or to force his *Almighty* Will into a Compliance with yours? Gird up your selves like Men, and I will demand of you in the Name of God; have you an Arm like God, or can you *thunder* with a Voice like *him*? are ye able to withstand the *Whirlwind* of *his* Power, or to shelter your Heads against the *Storms* of *his*

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Vengeance? alas! no; a *Feather* in the Air may sooner stop a *Thunder-bolt* that comes roaring down from the Clouds, than you can the Course of that *Almighty Will* which doth whatever it pleases both in *Heaven* and *Earth*: And if so, with what safety can you oppose your *impotent Will* to it, or how can you expect to prosper in such an *unequal Contention*? Since therefore *God* doth so infinitely *out-match* you, and 'tis infallibly certain, that *first* or *last* he will be too hard for you; all that is left to your Choice is, whether you will *do* his Will or *suffer* it; whether you will *obey* his *Commands*, or *endure* his *Infiictions*: for one of these you *must* do, but which of the *Two*, is left to your *own Election*. If you think it more *eligible* to obey what *God* hath *enjoynd*, than to endure what he will *inflict*, you may by choosing the *former*, eternally secure your selves from the *latter*; For, besides, that such is the *generous Goodness* of *God's Nature*, as it will not permit him to trample upon the *Prostrate*, nor to deny *fair Quarter* to such as lay down their Arms, and freely surrender themselves to *his Will* and *Disposal*, besides this, I say, upon the Satisfaction which his own *Son* hath made for the *Sins* of the *World*, he hath obliged himself by a *publick Grant* and *Promise* of *Mercy* to receive us into his *Favour* and *Protection* upon our-

unfaigned Submission to him, and to treat us graciously notwithstanding all our *past* Rebellions, as if we had been for ever perfectly *loyal* to him, and had neither in *Thought*, nor *Word*, nor *Deed* offended him. So that if now if we will heartily submit *our* Wills to him, he cannot let *loose* his Power on us without forfeiting *his* Truth, and doing Violence to the Perfections of *his own* Nature. But notwithstanding all the *Goodness* of his own Nature, and all the *Vertue* of that *Propitiation* that he hath made for our *Sins*, this is a Law which he will never dispense with; *I will see that my Creatures shall obey me, or feel me, that they shall conform to my Will, or sink under my Vengeance; and if they will be so desperate as to refuse the former, all the Powers of Heaven and Earth shall not secure them from the latter.* If therefore you are so abandoned of all Reason, as to think it *more* eligible to suffer the Will of God than to obey it, you must e'en take what follows; for as sure as God is in *Heaven*, and you upon *Earth*, you shall one Day feel the Weight of his Arm, if you do not freely *surrender* your selves to *his* Will and Disposal. But before you do so, for your *Souls* sake consider once more what a *terrible* Election you are making, that 'tis the *unquenchable* Wrath of the *ever-living* God that you are throwing your selves upon, a Wrath that will *imprint* it self upon every
every

every Faculty of your Nature, and be dropping like *burning Sulphur* upon your Souls *for ever*. And if after you have considered this, you will still adhere to your *desperate* Option, *the Lord have mercy upon your Souls*.

4. And lastly, Consider, that if there were *no* Obligation to this Duty, or *no* Danger in the contrary, yet in thus denying *our selves*, and resigning *our Wills* to God, we do the most *effectually* consult *our own* Interest. For God, being infinitely happy in *his own* Perfections, and deriving all *possible* Satisfaction from his own *Self-Sufficiency*, cannot be supposed to desire *any* Thing for himself *without* himself; and being perfectly exempted from *all* Want and Indigence by the *infinite* Fulness of his Being, he can have *nothing* of Envy or Malice in his Nature, which are *weak* and *impotent* Passions that do *always* spring out of a sense of Need and Insufficiency, and are *utterly* inconsistent with a State of *perfect* Fulness and Beatitude. Since therefore in his *outward* Administrations he can have no *Self-Ends* to serve upon his Creatures, and since he can have no Principle of *Envy* or *Malice* towards them in his Nature, it hence necessarily follows that in ruling and governing them he can have no *other* Design upon them but to do them *good*, and make them like *himself*, *i. e.* perfectly *good* and perfectly *happy*. So that
God's

God's End and *ours* is always the same; *we* would be happy and God would have us so too, and *we* our selves cannot aim at our Happiness more *heartily* and *sincerely* than he does; all the Difference therefore between *him* and *us* is about the *Means* and *Way* to our Happiness: We are for *one* Way, and he is for *another*; *we* think the Way to our Happiness is *to live in all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and he thinks the Way to it is *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*. So that the whole Dispute between God and *us*, so far as Reason is concerned in it, depends upon *this*, whether God be in the right, or *our selves*; whether *we* are not deceived in chusing *this* Way, or God be not deceived in prescribing the *contrary*. If we have any Reason to think that *we* are *wiser* than God, or do better understand the Way to *our own* Happiness; then it must be acknowledged that in refusing God's Way and chusing *our own*, we do advisedly consult *our own* Interest; but this is *such* a Supposal, as, I believe, never entered into *any* Man's *sober* Thoughts. And if we have all the Reason in the world to conclude not only that God is *wiser* than *we*, but that whereas *we* are extremely *short-sighted* and *apt* to be imposed upon with *glistening* Shews and Appearances, he hath such a *full* Comprehension of all Things as that he cannot be

be deceived; then we may be sure that when we forsake *our own* Way and follow God's we cannot be *mised*, but at every step must be tending directly to *our own* Happiness. For if God cannot be deceived, and we may, it is certain that whenever *our* Way to Happiness lies contrary to *his*, he is in the *right* and we are in the *wrong*; and consequently that when we forsake *his* Way to follow *our own*, we go from Happiness to Misery. It is *likely* that *we* should know what belongs to *humane* Nature, and the *ordering* and *regulating* its Affections and Actions? That *we* should understand the *just* Bounds and Measures where it is to be *restrained* and where to be *indulged* better than the God that formed and composed it. And if it be *not*, as doubtless it is not, were we not much better resign *our* Wills to *his* Government than to live at *our own* Disposal? For he desires to govern us for no *other* Reason but because he knows he can govern us much better than *our selves*. He sees that we are a sort of *blind* and *precipitant* Creatures, that must unavoidably stumble into *eternal* Ruine if we follow *our own* Wills; and therefore he would fain retrieve us out of *our own* Hands, that so having the *sole* Disposal of us *himself*, he may conduct us safely to Happiness. And when *He* intends as kindly to *us* as *we* can to *our selves*, were we not better

better follow *his* Wisdom than *our own* Folly? He knows that our *Self-love* will in the Effect prove *Self-hatred* to us, if it be not moderated and directed by a *better* and a *wiser* Love; and therefore he would have it under the direction of *his*, which is the *best* and *wisest* Love in the World. He desires to have the Government of our Will upon no *other* Account but only that he might determine *all* its Choices to our Happiness, and requires our Hearts of us meerly for *this* End, that he might fill them with Peace and Rest. He knows that our Perfection and Happiness lies in Compliance with our Duty, in *Piety* and *Justice*, *Mercy* and *Humility*, and that out of the *free* and *constant*, *sprightly* and *vivacious* Exercise of these *Virtues* arises *all* our *Heaven*, both *here* and *hereafter*; and knowing this, that *tender* Love he bears us, that *mighty* Concern he hath for our Welfare makes him thus *urgent* and *importunate* with us in his Demands of our Duty; for he regards our Duty no farther than it tends to our *Good*, and values *each* Act of our Obedience by what it contributes to our Happiness. He affects not to burthen us with *unnecessary* Impositions; all that he requires of us is what our Interest requires, which is so *dear* and *precious* to him that he will dispense with nothing that is *necessary* to promote and secure it; and 'tis there-

therefore he will not dispense with us, because he *cannot*, without releasing us from our Obligation to be happy. Why then should we desire, O *foolish* Creatures that we are, to be released from the Yoak of *his* Government? Or how can we count it Liberty to be *loosed* from an *infinite* Goodness that is conducted by *infinite* Wisdom and Power? For whatsoever my *blind* Lusts and Passions may dictate, my Reason assures me that the *greatest* Priviledge that belongs to a Creature is to be under the Government of *God*, and that if he should release me from my Subjection to *his* Will by a Dispensation under the *Broad-Seal* of *Heaven*, and give me an *unlimited* Licence to live as I list, promising *never* to be displeased with me more, or to take any *farther* Cognizance of my Actions; the *best* and *wisest* Thing I could do for my self would be to *resign* back my self to his Government, and surrender *up* my *blind* and *precipitant* Will to his most *wise* and *gracious* Disposal! And if he should refuse to *re-admit* me to his Government, and abandon me *for ever* to my own *Self-Will*, I should be the most *forlorn* Soul on this side *Hell*; I should not know what to do, nor which Way to turn my self; but be forced to wander in a *dark* Wilderness without being ever able to discover any certain *Path way* to my Happiness. But

so long as I am under the Government of God, I am sure I am safe; and while I follow his *All-wise* and most *gracious* Will, I know that I am going to a *happy* End; and that how rough soever my Way *is*, it will bring me to *Canaan*. What then remains but that from henceforth we utterly deny *our selves*, renounce our *corrupt* Wills and Inclinations, and cheerfully resign our selves to the Will of God; which hath no *other* Design upon us but to do us *Good*, to raise and advance our *degenerate* Natures, and conduct us through the Kingdom of *Grace* into the Kingdom of *Glory*.

I JOHN III. 7.

*Little Children, let no man deceive you:
He that doth righteousness, is righteous,
even as he is righteous.*

THese Words are a short and plain Resolution of that *Grand Case*, viz. how a Man may know whether he be in a state of *Grace* and *Favour* with God; or, which is all one, whether he be a *good Man* and a *good Christian*. The *Gnosticks*, against whom St. John particularly directs this Epistle, placed all *Righteousness* and *Goodness* in certain pretended *Illuminations*, which had nothing in them but certain *swelling Words* of *Vanity*, and like *gilded Bubbles* were blown up with *Wind*, and filled with *mystical Nonsense*. And tho' in their *Lives* and *Manners* they were a *Reproach* and *Scandal* not only to *Religion*, but even to *humane Nature*; yet meerly upon the account of these their *own Wild Dreams*, they vaunted themselves to be the only *Elect*, and *Favourites* of *God*, and imagined themselves advanced to that degree of *Perfection*, as that they were above all *Law*, and freely dispensed with under the *Broad-Seal* of *Heaven* to live as they list,
and

and to wallow in *Riot* and *Voluptuousness*. Against these *wild Men* the *Apostle* here seems to forewarn *his little Children*; suffer not these vile Deceivers to impose upon your Faith this their *damnable Error*, viz. that by receiving their *high-flown Mysteries* and *pretended Revelations*, you shall without any more ado be constituted *perfect* and *righteous Men* in the sight of *God*; for from *God* himself I do assure you that *he*, and *he* only, *that doth Righteousness*, is *righteous* even as *he is righteous*, . . . as *Christ* is *righteous*, of whom I just before discoursed.

In the Prosecution of which Argument I shall endeavour these two Things; *First*, to shew you, what it is to *do Righteousness* in general; Secondly, what that *righteous Doing* is which in the sense of *Christianity* constitutes us *Righteous Men*.

1. What it is to *do Righteousness* in general. I answer, it is to give to every one his *Due*, or to perform to *God*, our selves, and to all the World whatsoever is owing from the State of our *Nature*, and the *Relations* and *Circumstances* wherein we are placed. And in this Latitude to *do Righteousness* is the sum of *Religion*, and the *Whole Duty* of Man. The *righteous Man* therefore, or the Man that doth *Righteousness* is, in the sense of the Text, one, that demeans himself so, as in the Judgment of *Right Reason* he ought

to do towards God, himself, and all the World; that looking upon himself under the *Relation* of God's Creature and Pensioner, doth freely render him all that *Homage*, and *Reverence*, and *Love*, and *Gratitude*, and *Trust*, and *Adoration* that are owing to so great a Creator, and so liberal a Benefactor; One that considering the Frame of his own Nature, how he is compounded of *contrary* Principles, *viz.* *Spirit* and *Flesh*, *Reason* and *Sense*, exercises himself in all those *humane* Virtues, which consist in the Dominion of his *superiour* Principles of *Reason* over his *sensitive* Passions and Appetites; such as *Patience* and *Equanimity*, *Courage* and *Meekness*, *Temperance* and *Chastity*; all which are proper to us as Beings made up of *contrary* Principles, from whence spring those *contrary* Appetites and *Inclinations* in us; in the good or bad Government whereof, the *Essence* of *humane* Virtue and Vice consists. In a Word, the *righteous* Man is one, who, considering his *State*, and *Circumstances*, and *Relations* in the World, behaves himself in them all as *right Reason* directs and obliges him; that as he is a *Member* of *humane* Society, bears an hearty *Good-Will* to the whole *Corporation* of Mankind; that is *courteous* and *affable*, *peaceable* and *condescending*, *long-suffering* and *ready to forgive*; that is *grateful* to those from whom he hath received *Good*, and so

far as he hath Opportunity, is ready to do *Good to others*; that is *faithful* to his *Promises*, *sincere* in his *Professions*, *just* and *honest* in his *Dealings*; that heartily wishes every Man were *good*, and without *manifest* Reason to the contrary, believes every one to be so; that when he sees a *Fault* is ready to *excuse* it, and where he cannot, silently *bemoans* and *laments* it; that as a *Subject* is *loyal* and *obedient* to his *Superiors*, and as a *Superior* is careful of the *Publick Good*, and *just* and *benign* towards all his *Inferiours*; that as a *Father* loves his *Children*, piously and wisely educates them, and is provident for their *Happiness* both *here* and *hereafter*; that as a *Child* reverences his *Parents*, and is ready to *comfort* and *assist* them in their *Needs*, and in all lawful *Things* to render them a *cheerful* Obedience; that as a *Husband* is *kind* to his *Wife*, *compassionate* to her *Infirmities*, and *ease* to be intreated by her; that as a *Wife* is *modest* in her *Behaviour*, *careful* and *vigilant* in her *Family*, and *soft* and *tractable* to the *Will* of her *Husband*; that as a *Master* is *just* and *benevolent* to his *Servants*, and studious of their *Welfare* both *temporal* and *eternal*; that as a *Servant* is *industrious* in his *Business*, and *faithful* to his *Trust*, and *obedient* to his *Master*; that in *Adversity* is *resigned* and *contented*, honestly *industrious* to live, and *grateful* to those that relieve him

him; that in *Prosperity* is *humble* and *modest*, and full of *good Works*; and to name no more, He is a *cordial Friend*, a *good Neighbour*, a *faithful Correspondent*, and a *zealous Lover* of his *Country*: These are the *main Ingredients* that compound a *righteous Man*; and accordingly we find that where-ever he is mentioned in *Scripture*, he is always described by such like *Characters* as these: thus in the *15th Psalm*, where the *Psalmist* sets himself on purpose to describe the *righteous Man* that should dwell in the *Tabernacle of God*, he is represented as one that *walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness*; that *speaketh Truth*, and is *tender* of his *Neighbour's Reputation*; that *freely lends* to those that are in *Need*, and will not be *bribed against the Innocent*. So also *Ezek.* 18. 14, 15, 16, 17. he is described to be one that is no *Idolater*, no *Adulterer*, no *Oppressor*; that doth not *defraud* his *Neighbour* of his *Right*, but is *just* and *Liberal* to the *Poor*, and *freely lends* to those that are in *need*. And *Micah* 6. 7. the *Prophet* tells us what it is that renders us *just* and *acceptable* in the sight of *God*, viz *doing Justice*, *loving Mercy*, and *walking Humbly with God*. So also in the *New Testament* we are taught, that *pure and undefiled Religion* consists in *visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction*, and *keeping our selves unspotted from*

the World. James 1. 27. and Gal. 5. 22. St. Paul tells us that the *fruits of the Spirit* which render us *righteous* in the sight of God, are such as these, *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance*; and to name no more, the same *Apostle Tit. 2. 11.* saith, that the *Righteousness* which the *Gospel, or Grace* of God designs to propagate in the *World*, is this, *that denying ungodliness and worldly-lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World*; which *Three*, are the *Sum* of all those *Virtues* which constitute a *Righteous Man*.

Having thus shewed what it is in general to do *Righteousness*, I now proceed in the *second Place* to shew what that *Righteous Doing* is, which in the *Sense of Christianity* doth constitute us *Righteous Men*: In order to which it will be necessary to premise these *Three Things*.

1. That *Christianity* supposes many *Imperfections* and *Infirmities* in those whom it yet allows to be *Righteous Men*; and indeed if it did not, it could admit no *Man* in the *World* to be *righteous*. For it hath seemed good to the *Divine Wisdom* to introduce us into the *World* in an *imperfect State*, that so by the *good Use* of our own *free Wills* and *rational Faculties*, assisted by his *Grace*, we might by *Degrees* advance to a more *sublime*
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and *perfect* Condition, till through our *gradual* Progress from this *rude* and *imperfect* State, we at length arrive to the Perfection of Happiness for which we were made: And such is the Condition of our Nature, as that it is as necessary for us to begin imperfectly, as to be born Infants; nor can a *Babe in Christ* any more have the Perfections of a *grown* and *experienced* Christian, than can an *Infant* of a Span long have the Strength and Wisdom of a Man. In this State of Things therefore, if God will not allow the *lowest* Degree of our Perfection to be *good*, neither can he the *highest*; for our Improvement being gradual, there must of necessity be a *first* Degree, before there can be a *second*; and therefore if God allows not the *first*, he must for the same Reason disallow the *second* of the *same* kind, and so on from the *third* to the *highest* Degree of all. Seeing therefore *Christianity* is a *Religion* for Men, it must be supposed to be fitted to their *low* and *imperfect* Condition, which it could not be if it did not *abate* for our Defects, and admit us to be *righteous* in the *main*, even while we are imperfectly so; and that it doth so, is apparent by the distinction it frequently makes between the *less* and the *more* Perfect, still allowing both to be Righteous. Thus it distinguishes between *Babes* and *Men*, allowing *both* to be in *Christ*; between

the *Weak*, and the *Strong*, and *Confirmed* allowing both to be in the Faith: And our Saviour himself speaking of *some*, who upon receiving the Seed of the Gospel brought forth *Thirty*, of *others* who brought forth *Sixty*, and *others* a *Hundred-fold*, doth yet allow them all to be good Ground. Matth. 13. and Luke 19. 14. He as well allows *him* to be a good and faithful Servant who had improved his *Talent into Five*, as he who had improved *his into Ten*. From all which it is evident, that the Gospel doth not judge of our *main* State by the Degrees, but by the Reality of our Righteousness.

2. It is to be premised, that *that* which constitutes us *Righteous Men* in the Judgment of the Gospel, is some *internal vital* Principle of Righteousness. For as all other Things receive their Denomination from their Forms, so it is from some *internal* Form of Righteousness that *righteous Men* receive their Denomination. It is not the simple doing *righteous* Actions that constitutes a Man righteous; for he may be a very *bad* Man, not only while he doth that which is Righteous, but also in the very doing of it. Thus a Man may *fast* and *pray*, only to *gloss* his Oppressions; he may do an *honest* Action, to *disguise* a *knaveish* Design, in which Case he sins in the doing of it, because in the doing it, he *profanes* Religion
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by making it a *Cloak* for his Wickedness ; a plain Evidence, that Actions which in themselves are materially *good*, do partake of the *Principles* from whence they do proceed, and receive their *Form* and *Denomination* from them ; seeing even *good* Actions may be infected by a *bad* Principle, and derive into themselves the *Malignity* and *Baseness* of the Fountains from whence they flow. And if without a *righteous* Principle our Actions cannot be *righteous*, to be sure neither can we ; because *we* are as our Actions are. Hence you may observe in the *New Testament*, that *good* Men are generally denominated from some *internal* Form of Goodness ; they are said to be *born of God*, and to have the *seed of God remaining in them*. 1. Joh. 3. 9. and to be *renewed in the Spirit of their Mind*, Eph. 4. 23. to be *spiritually minded*, Rom. 8. 6. and to be *transformed by the renewing of their Mind*, Rom. 12. 2. and to be *partakers of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. all which, do plainly denote, that to constitute us *righteous Men* in the Sense of the *Gospel*, there is necessarily required some *internal* Form and Principle of Righteousness.

3. And lastly, We must premise, that *Christianity* being the Law or Rule of our Religion, the *internal* Principle, which in the Sense of this Law constitutes us Righteous, must be strictly Religious ; that is, it must

be such as doth immediately respect *God*, who is the *great Object* of all *Religion*. For *Religion* in the strictest Sense, is the Rule of *Divine Worship*, and under this Notion of *Divine Worship*, or *Homage*, and *Obedience to God*, *Christianity* exacts every Duty of us; for it requires us *to do all as unto God*, and *to do all to the Glory of God*; i. e. in *Obedience to him*, and out of a *sincere Acknowledgment* of his *Authority* over us, and *immutable Right* to rule and command us: And even those *moral Virtues* which do immediately respect our *Neighbours* and *our selves*, are enjoyed as Duties unto *God*, and bound upon us with *religious Obligations*. So that now all the *Acts* and *Functions* of a good Life are adopted into the Rubrick of *Christian Worship*, and required of us as *Acts* of *Obedience to God*; from whence it follows, that the Spring and Principle of those *Acts* must be strictly Religious, immediately respecting *God* and his *Authority* over us; it being impossible those *Acts* should be truly *religious*, which do not proceed from a *religious Principle*.

These Things being premised, I come now to lay down what *that Principle* is, which in the Sense of *Christian Religion* constitutes us *righteous Men*. In general, it is a *considerate, universal prevailing Resolution* to obey *God*, proceeding from our Belief of
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the *Christian Religion*: For the better understanding of which, I shall briefly explain the *particular* Terms of it.

1. I say it is a *Resolution*.
2. It is a *Resolution* of obeying *God*.
3. It is a *Considerate* Resolution.
4. An *universal*, and
5. A *prevalent* one.
6. A Resolution of obeying *God*, springing out of our Belief of the *Christian Religion*.

1. It is a Resolution; by which I exclude the *Habit* of Obedience from being the *prime* and *constitutive* Principle of *Christian* Righteousness. For *Christianity*, as was shewn before, supposing *great* Imperfections and Infirmities even in those whom it allows to be *righteous* in the main; if we would judge rightly of *our own* State by the *Christian* Rule, we must take measure of *our selves* from that which is the *lowest* and most *imperfect* Principle of Righteousness, and not conclude our selves to be *unrighteous*, because we are not righteous to *such* a Degree; but as for the habit of Obedience which consists in an *inherent* Promptness, Faculty and Easiness to obey, it is so *perfect* a Principle, as is not attainable but under a *long* Progress in *Religion*. For when after a *vicious* Course of Life we begin to reform, we are so far from being *habituated* to obey

obey God, that we obey him with Difficulty, and *strong* Reluctancy, and are fain to row against the Stream of *our own* Inclination; in which state we are far from having attained to an *Habit* or Promptness of obeying. So that by making *this* the *constitutive* Principle of *Christian* Righteousness, we exclude from the State of Righteousness all *Beginners* in Religion, and do allow none to be *faithful* Servants, but those who have conquer'd the difficulties of obeying. The true Form or Principle therefore, from which we receive the Denomination of *righteous Men* is *that* Point or Term, from which we *begin* to be righteous, and that is a *righteous* Resolution. For *Choice* and Resolution is the Spring of all *voluntary Actions*, and consequently from thence we begin to act righteously, and in the pursuit of *that*, we grow and improve into an *habit* of Righteousness. Our *first* step, is to resolve well; our *next*, to do well; the *uninterrupted* Repetition of which, will at length improve into an *habit* of well-doing. *I will arise*, says the *Prodigal*, and go to my Father; *that* was the *first* step of his Return, and the *vital* Principle whence all his *After-Motions* did proceed.

2. It is a Resolution to obey God; by which I exclude those *good* Resolutions from being the *Christian* Principle of Righteousness

ness which have *no* respect at all to God, but either to the gratifying our *natural* Temper only, or to the *securing* our Health, or Reputation, or *secular* Interest; which, tho' they may be productive of very *good* *Morals* in our Conversation, are far from being the *inward* Form and Principle of Righteousness which Christianity requires; for *that*, as was before premised, must be strictly *religious*, and consequently, must be a *Resolution* to obey God. For that we should obey God, is the *fundamental* Law of Religion, whence all its *particular* Laws derive their Force and Obligation; and therefore to resolve to obey God must be the *fundamental* Principle of Religion from whence all the *particular* Acts of it proceed. So that the *internal* Principle which constitutes us religiously *good*, must answer to that *external* Principle which obliges us to be so; and it is only our Resolution to obey God, which answers to that *external* Principle that makes it our Duty to obey him. In *this* Resolution, and in *this* only, consists the *Submission* of our Wills to God, the *Homage* and *Fealty* of our Souls; without which, all *external* shews of *Piety* and *Virtue*, are but a *dead* Formality. Not that an *actual* explicate Resolution of obeying God is necessary to every *good* Action, for this is impossible; our Occasions of doing good being to *infinite*, and so *often* occurring

curring in our *secular* Affairs, and our Minds so incapable of attending many Things at once, that it is not in our Power to form an *actual* Resolution of Obedience, as often as we are called upon to do *good* Actions. It is sufficient therefore, that in general we have *such* a Resolution fixt in our Minds; and this, tho' we do not exert it in every *particular* Action, will constitute every Action *good*, and render it acceptable to God.

3. It must be a *considerate*, *well-weighed* Resolution; by which I exclude from being the Principle of *Christian* Righteousness, all those *rash* and *unsettled* Purposes Men make in Heats of *Passion*. For there can never be any *holding good* Resolution, but what is founded upon *Reason* and *Judgment*; for *Reason* is the same Thing in all Circumstances; it is a *stiff* and *inflexible* Thing, that will not ply and bend to the *Alterations* of our Humours and Interests; whereas *Passion* is a *fickle* and *inconstant* Thing that is generally governed by *outward* Accidents, and is as *various* and *mutable* as they. He therefore that founds his *good* Resolutions upon Heats of *Passion*, sets his Soul upon a *Weather-cock*, which every *contrary* Blast of Humour or Interest, blows into a *contrary* Position. Till such time therefore as a Man hath a *new* Judgment of Things, it will be in vain for him to make any *new* Resolutions;

ons; because it is *morally* impossible that *any* Resolution should be lasting, that is not founded upon *Reason* and *Judgment*. But when a Man hath steared the *past* Course of his Life by an *old, inveterate, false* Judgment of Things, it will require a great deal of *serious* Consideration to form and settle a new one; and if before this is done, men enter upon *new* Resolutions, they must resolve without considering either the *Matters* they resolve on, or the *Motives* which should support their Resolution; insomuch that when they come to practise what they *thus* hastily resolved, either they find more Difficulty in the *Matter* than they were aware of, or want *sufficient* Motives to carry them through it; by reason of which their Resolution *flaggs* in the Execution, and many times yields to the *next* Temptation that encounters them. To the forming therefore of a *holding* Resolution, such as will prove a *living* Principle of Righteousness, great Care must be taken to found it on a *through* Consideration both of the Particulars we resolve upon, together with their *appendent* Difficulties; and of the Motives and Arguments with which *Christianity* backs and inforces it. First we must set before our Eyes the *Sins* we must part with, and the *Duties* we must submit to, and fairly represent to our selves the *many* Difficulties

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ties and Temptations that are like to attend us in both; and having thus placed our selves in the *midst* of the Difficulties of a *religious Life*, and so far as in us lies, rendered them *actual* and *present* to us; we must never cease pressing our *stubborn* Wills with the Arguments and Motives of *Religion*, till we have obtained of them an *explicite* Consent to every Duty that calls for our Resolution. And when we have *thus* weighed all Particulars over and over in the Ballance of an *impartial* Consideration, and implored the *Divine* Assistance, (without which our *strongest* Resolution will certainly fail, and which is never wanting to any but those who are wanting to themselves) let us then resolve, and seal our Resolution with *solemn* Vows and Promises to God. For thus our *blessed Saviour*, when he saw the Multitude forward to follow him, fairly proposes to their Consideration the Difficulties they must engage in, if they would be his Disciples; that so their resolving in *too* much haste, might not give them Occasion to repent at *leisure*; as you may see at large *Luke* 14. 26---34. And elsewhere he compares *rash* and *inconsiderate* Resolvers, to a Man that goes about to build a Tower, without ever considering what it will cost, or whether he hath Money sufficient to finish it; and so when he hath laid the Foundation gives it over,

over, and renders himself *ridiculous*; and the *same* he compares also to a *King* that goes to war without ever considering whether he hath Force *enough* to encounter his Enemy, and so rushing headlong into the Battle, is either forced to *retreat*, or *yield* to the Mercy of the Conqueror. And in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal* Luke 15. wherein he purposely describes the *whole* Progress of the Soul towards God; the first Thing the Prodigal did after he came to himself, was to consider what an *happy* Change he should make in his Condition by returning to his Father; *how many hired Servants of my Fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* and having well considered *this*, he at length resolves, *I will arise and go to my Father.* Thus also the Prophet David introduces his Resolution of Amendment, through a *deep* and *serious* Consideration of his ways, *I thought on my ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.* Psal. 119. 59.

4. It must be an *universal* Resolution of obeying God, such as indifferently extends to *all* the Instances of our Duty, otherwise it can be no *intire* Principle of Righteousness; because tho' it may reform us in *some* Instances, it must leave us unreformed in *others*, and so can only render us less *wicked*, but never intirely good. For seeing the *Chri-*
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stian Law exacts of us *universal* Obedience, and doth not oblige us in *one* Instance, and dispence with us in *another*; it is impossible that *any* Resolution should be the Principle of *that* Righteousness it requires, but that which respects the whole. *If we keep the whole Law*, saith St. James, *and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all*; for which he subjoyns this Reason, *he that hath said, do not commit Adultery; said also, do not kill*, James 2. 10, 11. *i. e.* it is the *same* Authority that forbids the *one* as well as the *other*; and therefore, tho' thou dost not the *one*, yet if thou dost the *other*, thou sinnest against the Authority of both. Seeing therefore we are not accounted universally *righteous* by the Law of *Christ*, unless we do universally obey it, a *partial* Resolution to obey can never constitute us Righteous; because *such* a Resolution will never make us universally obedient. *Then shall I not be ashamed*, saith David, *when I have respect unto all the Commandments*. Psal. 119. 6. So that to make our Resolution a *Christian* Principle of Righteousness, it is necessary that it should be *universal*, *i. e.* of equal extent with *that* Law which is the Measure of our Righteousness; that like a *fruitful* Womb it should be *pregnant* with every good Work, and *virtually* contain in it every Particular that our Religion hath made our Duty.

5. It must be a *prevailing* Resolution; a Resolution of such Force as doth engage us to *do* what we resolve, and actually prevails over all Temptations to the contrary. For all the Virtue of a *good* Resolution consists in its Relation to Action, because if *that* we resolve to do, be not *necessary*, it is *indifferent* whether we resolve to do it or no; but if it be, it must be done, otherwise we had been as good *never* to have resolved to do it. The *goodness* of our Resolution therefore consists in *this*, that it is an Engagement to practise what we resolve; and consequently if our Resolution to obey God, be not prevalent enough to engage us to obey him, it is so far from being a *true* Principle of *Christian* Righteousness, that it is a meer *insignificant* Cypher. For as *that* can be no *Cause* which produces no *Effect*; so that can be no Principle of Righteousness, which is not productive of it; and if to make it a Principle of Righteousness, it is necessary, that it should be a *prevalent* Engagement to a *righteous* Life, then it follows that when it ceases to be prevalent, it ceases to be a Principle of Righteousness; and consequently that whenever we do commit any *Sin* that is inconsistent with a *prevailing* Resolution to obey God, we do for that Time cease to be *righteous* Men. But there are no *Sins* inconsistent with a *prevailing* Re-

solution to obey God, but such as do prevail
 against it, and actually *over-power* it; and
 therefore as for those *Weaknesses, Surreptions,*
 and *Surprizes*, which, for Distinction-sake,
 we call *Sins of Infirmary*; either we do not
 consent to them, and consequently they are
 so far from *over-powring* our good Resolu-
 tion, that they do not at all *contest* with it;
 or if we do consent to them, it is unawares,
 before we can *oppose* our Resolution against
 them. So that tho' upon Surprise they do
 win our Consent, yet they do not win it
 from our good Resolution, which in this
suadain Hurry of Thoughts had not time to
 canvas for it; but had Power enough to
 have obtained it, had it had but Opportu-
 nity to prefer its Claim; and therefore as
 for such *Sins* as these, they may fairly com-
 port with a *prevailing* Resolution of Obedi-
 ence. But then there are *Sins of Wilfulness*
 which proceed either from *wilful* Habits, or
 from *deliberate* Choice, and these are no
more consistent with *such* a Resolution, than
one Contrary is with *another* in the same
 Degree. For he who *sins* wilfully is preva-
 lently resolved to sin; and to be so, and at
 the same time prevalently resolved to obey
 God is a Contradiction in Terms. Whilst
 therefore *Sin* hath the Prevalence in us, we
 are so long *Servants* of *Sin*, and do so long
 cease to be *Servants* of *Righteousness*. 'Tis
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true, there are Degrees of *Wickedness*, and the longer a Man continues *wicked*, the worse he will be; but still he is a *wicked* Man, who is *more* prevalently resolved to *sin* than to obey God; and he who is so, tho' but for an *Hour* or a *Day*, is so long wicked, as well as he who continues so for a *Month* or a *Year*: He is not wicked indeed to so *high* a Degree, and so may far more easily recover; but from the Time that we deliberately consent to any *known* Sin, to the Time that we repent of it, we are *wilful* Sinners. If we repent immediately, we immediately recover into that *good* Estate from whence we were fallen, and so our Wound is cured almost as soon as it is made. For the *proper* Repentance of *single* Acts of *wilful* Sin, is either to resolve not to repeat them, or, where it can be done, to undo them again by Restitution. But when our *baffled* Resolution to obey God is thus recover'd into a *prevalent* Engagement to obey him, it revives into a *living* Principle of Righteousness; but yet before we can reasonably conclude it is such, we must make some *Trial* of it; for as it is certain, that until it be *Prevalent*, it is not a *true* Principle of Righteousness; so it is certain, that till for some time it hath actually prevailed, we cannot be *secure* that it is prevalent. That is not to be called a *prevalent*

Resolution, that for a *Day* or a *Week* puts us into a *Fit* of *Religion*, and so expires; such *flashy* Purposes are so far from being *thorough* Cures, that they are only so many *Intermissions* of our Disease, that always leave us as *bad* or *worse* than they found us. But if upon *sufficient* Tryal we find that our Resolution doth hold against *all* Temptations, and actually engage us to our Duty in despite of *all* Sollicitations to the contrary, we may then safely conclude, that it is *that* very *vital* Principle, which in the Judgment of our *holy Religion*, doth constitute us Righteous Men. And accordingly *Matth.* 21. 28, 29, 30. our *Saviour* compares those who might, but did not enter into the *Kingdom of Heaven*, to a *Son* that *first* resolved to go whither his Father commanded him, but *afterwards* cooled and did not obey; implying, that the *great* Fault, which spoiled his Resolution, and rendred it insignificant was this, that it was not *firm* and *prevalent*; which had it been, it had actually entered him in the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

6. And lastly, It must be a Resolution to obey God, springing out of our Belief of the *Christian Religion*; and this it is which renders it *strictly* and *properly*, a *Christian* Principle of Righteousness. 'Tis true indeed, if either we *never* heard of *Christianity*, or it had never been proposed to us, with *sufficient*

sufficient Motives of *Credibility*, our Infidelity would have been only our Misery, but not our Crime; and if upon a *through* Consideration of the Arguments of *natural Religion*, and of the *Good* and *Evil* which naturally springs out of *good* and *evil* Actions, we were effectually resolved to study the Will of *God*, and, so far as we understood it, to obey it; it had been no *criminal* Defect in our Resolution not to be founded upon our Belief of *Christianity*; because to believe without *sufficient* Reason, is so far from being our Duty, that it is our Defect, and an Argument of our *Weakness*, and *foolish* Credulity. But now that *Christianity* hath been made known, and sufficiently proposed to us, we cannot be *good* Men, unless we do believe it, and if we do believe it, we cannot be *good* Christians if we do not thereupon effectually resolve to obey it. In short therefore, they who have not the *Gospel*, are obliged to obey *God* upon the Motives of *natural Religion*, which is all that can reasonably be expected from them; but as for us who have the *Gospel*, wherein, together with the Arguments of Nature, *God* hath fairly proposed to us the *higher* Motives of *Christianity*, we are bound to believe *these* as well as *those*; and upon this Belief to proceed to a *firm* Resolution of Obedience; which if we do, our Resolution is strictly *Christian*.

in Contra-distinction to theirs who have not the Gospel, and so resolve only upon Principles of *Natural Reason* ; not but that their Resolution is for substance the *same* with ours, only *ours* is founded upon *greater* and more *prevalent* Motives. The Duties of *Christianity* are the same with those of *Natural Religion*, and excepting those three *positive* Precepts, of *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, and of worshipping God in and through *Christ*, there is no Command in the Gospel distinct from the *Eternal Rules* of *Morality* which the Gospel doth improve upon *new* Principles, and strengthen with more *powerful* Obligations.

And thus I have explained to you what is that *Vital* Form and Principle which, in the Sense of the Law of *Christ*, doth constitute us *Righteous* Men. In short, he is a *Righteous* Man in the true *Christian* Sense, who upon a *through* Consideration of the Arguments and Motives of *Christianity* is universally and prevalently resolved to obey its Laws. To conclude all therefore, from hence I infer,

1. What is the *true safe* Way for a Man to resolve his *own* Conscience concerning the *main* State of his *Soul*, whether in the Gospel-sense he be *Righteous*, or no. I know it is a common Doctrine with some Men, that the Resolution of this *great* Case depends

pends upon an *inward Whisper, Suggestion,* or *Testimony* of the *Spirit* of God, which I fear hath fatally deluded too many Men into a *groundless Confidence* and Assurance. For when all of a suddain they feel themselves surprized with *joyous* and *comfortable* Thoughts, they presently conclude it to be an *inward Whisper* and *Testimony* of the *Spirit* of God, when many times there is nothing in it but an *unaccountable* Frisque of *melancholly* Vapors heated and fermented by a *feverish* Humour; and many of these *sudden* Joys and Dejections, which these Men interpret to be the *Incomes* and *With-drawings* of the *Spirit* of God, do apparently proceed from no *other* Cause than the Shiverings and Burnings of an Ague; upon which account *Hysterical* Fits are frequently mistaken for *spiritual* Exercises. And when Men have most confidently believed themselves *overshadowed* by the *Holy Ghost*, their Fancies have been only hagg'd and ridden by the *Enthusiastick* Vapors of their own Spleen. And some times I make no doubt, but this *sudden* Flush of *joyous* Thoughts proceeds from a *worse* Principle, even from the suggestion of the *Devil*; who, tho' he hath no *immediate* Access to the Minds of Men, can doubtless act upon their *Spirits* and *Humours*, and thereby figure their *Fancies* with *sprightly* Ideas,

and *tickle* their *Hearts* into a Rapture ; and this Power of *his* we may reasonably suppose he is ready enough to exert upon any mischievous Occasion, whenever he finds a Man willing to be deceived, and to rely upon *ungrounded* Presumptions. The *true* and only *safe* Way therefore for a Man to resolve himself is impartially to survey himself, and to consider whether in the *main* his Intentions and Actions are righteous. If you ask, by what *Signs* and *Tokens* shall a Man know this ? I answer, there is nothing can be a *true* Sign of *Righteousness* but *Righteousness*, nothing but what is an Act or Instance of Righteousness. But then we must have a great Care, that we do not argue from *particular* Acts and Instances that we are Righteous in the *main* ; For you may as well conclude that you are not *blind*, because you *hear* well, or that you are not *deaf*, because you *see* well, or that you have *all* your Senses, because you have *one* or *two*, as that you are *Righteous* in the *main*, because you are so in *this* or *that* particular. Well then, how shall we do to resolve ourselves in this most *material* Enquiry ? Why do but consider what it is to be *Righteous*, and then reflect upon *your own* Motion, and you will quickly feel whether you are *Righteous* or no ; for to be *Righteous* is for the *main* to intend righteously, and act accordingly.

cordingly. If you ask again, how you shall know whether you *so* intend and act; I shall only answer, that it is an *unreasonable* Question, and that you might as well ask, whether you are *hungry* or *thirsty*; because you do as *naturally* feel the Motions of your *Soul*, as those of your *Body*; and for you to ask *another* Man what *your own* Intentions are, is to make him a *Conjurer* instead of a *Cajust*. Would it not look extremely ridiculous for a Man to ask his *Creditor* or *Customer*, Good Sir, how shall I know whether I intend to pay my Debts, or am sincerely resolved not to over-reach you? Should any Man ask me *such* a Question, I should only bid him consult himself, and if then he suspected his *own* Honesty, truly I should suspect that he had *too* much Reason for it. For if a Man intends righteously, to be sure he intends it *knowingly*; and if he knowingly intends it, he cannot but *know* he intends it; for if he cannot know that he doth it, it is because he cannot know how to do it; and if he cannot know *how* to do it, he is not a *capable* Subject of *Morality*, but must of necessity *live* and *act* at random, and blunder on, like a Traveller in the dark, without being able to distinguish whether he goes *right* or *wrong*. Wherefore as you would not be deceived in a Point of the *highest* Importance in the World, a Point
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upon which your *everlasting* Fate depends, *viz.* whether you are *Righteous* Men or no; do not measure your selves by any *other* Rule, but *this* sure and infallible one in the Text, *He that doth Righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

2. From hence I infer, that seeing Righteousness is the *good* State of our Souls, that the *main* Thing upon which we ought to value our selves is upon our being truly *Righteous*. For if we have any such Thing as a *rational* and *immortal* Soul about us, it is doubtless by far the *noblest* Ingredient of our Beings; 'tis *that* by which we are near allyed to *Angels*, and do even border upon *God* himself. He therefore who values himself by any thing but his *Soul*, and that which is its Grace and Perfection, begins at the *wrong* End of himself, forgets his *Jewels*, and estimates his Estate by his *Lumber*; in so much that one would think it impossible, did not *too* many *woful* Experiments daily evince the contrary, that any Creature owning and believing a *rational* and *immortal* Spirit to be a Part of its Being, should be so ridiculous as to value it self by such *little trifling* Advantages as a *well-coloured* Skin, a Suit of *fine* Cloaths, a Puff of *Popular* Applause, a Bag of *red* or *white* Earth; and yet, *God* help us, these are the *only* Things almost by which we differ-

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ference our selves from one *another*. You are a much *better* Man than your Neighbour, who is a very *poor contemptible* Wretch, a *little creeping despicable* Animal, not worthy to be taken notice of by such a one as you. Why in the name of God, Sir, what's the matter? Where is this *mighty* Difference between *you* and *him*? Hath he not a *Soul* as well as you, a *Soul* that is capable to live as *long* and be as *happy* as yours. Yes, that is true indeed; but notwithstanding that, you thank God for it, you are another guize Man than he; for you have a much *handsomer* Body, your Apparel is *finer* and more *fashionable*; you live in a more *splendid* Equipage, and have a *larger* Purse to maintain it; and to your *great* Comfort, your Name is *more* in Vogue and makes a far *greater* Rattle in the World. And is this all the Difference then between your mighty *Self*, and your *poor* Neighbour? Alas, a *few* Days more will put an end to all this; and when your *rich* Attires are reduced to a *Winding-sheet*, and all your *vast* Possessions to *six* Foot of Earth, what will become of all these *little* Trifles, by which you value your selves so highly? Where now will be the *Beauty*, the *Wealth*, the *Port* and *Garb*, of which you are so conceited? Alas, now that *lovely* Body will look as pale and gattly, that *lofty* Soul will be left as *bare*, as *poor* and

and *naked*, as your *despised* Neighbours; and should you now meet his wandering *Ghost* in the *vast* World of *Spirits*, what will you have left to boast of more than he; now that your *Beauty* is withered, your *Wealth* vanished, and all your *outward Pomp* and *Splendor* buried in a *silent* Grave? Now you will have nothing left to distinguish you from the most *Contemptible*, unless you have *wiser* and *better* Souls, which are the only Preheminencies above other Men that will survive our *Funerals*, and distinguish us from *base* and *abject* Souls for ever. If we are now more *pious*, and *humble*, and *just*, and *charitable* than other Men, this will stick by us when our Heads are laid, and to all *Eternity* render us *glorious* and *happy*. And indeed when once we have thrown off our Body and all our *bodily* Passions and Necessities, the only *Goods* we shall be capable of enjoying are God, *our selves*, and the Society of *blessed Spirits*, and these are no otherwise enjoyable but only by Acts of *Piety* and *Virtue*. It is only by our *Contemplation* and *Worship*, our *Love* and *Imitation* of God that we can enjoy him; it is only by our *Prudence* and *Moderation*, our *Temperance* and *Humility* that we can enjoy *our selves*; it is only by our *Charity* and *Justice*, our *Modesty*, *peaceable* and *mutual* Submission and *Condescension* to one *another* that we
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can enjoy the glorious Society of *blessed Spirits*, but if our *unbodied Spirits* carry with them these *divine Graces* into the *other World*, we shall by them be possessed of every Thing our utmost Wishes can propose; of a good God, a god-like, joyous and contented Mind, a peaceful, kind, and righteous Neighbourhood, and so all above, within, and without us will be a pure and perfect Heaven. So that if when I go from hence to seek my Fortune in the World of *Spirits*, God should thus bespeak me, *O man! seeing thou art now leaving all the Enjoyments of sense, consult what will do thee good, and thou shalt have whatever thou wilt ask to carry with thee into the spiritual State: I say should God thus offer me, I am sure the utmost Good I could wisely crave, would be this, Lord give me a Heart inflamed with Love, and winged with Duty to thee, that thereby I may but enjoy thee; give me a sober and a temperate Mind, that thereby I may enjoy my self; give me a kind and peaceable and righteous Temper, that thereby I may enjoy the sweet Society of blessed Spirits: O give me but these blessed Things, and thou hast crowned all my Wishes, and to Eternity I will never ask any other Favour for my self but only this, that I may continue a holy and a righteous Soul for ever; for so long as I continue so, I am sure I shall enjoy all spiritual Goods, and be as Happy as Heaven*

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can make me. What a *prodigious* Piece of Folly therefore is it for Men to value themselves more upon these *outward* Advantages, of which e'er long they must be stript, than upon the *Graces* and *Virtues* of their own Minds, on which they must subsist for ever? Suppose now that you were a *Merchant* in a *far Country* where you were allowed for a short *uncertain* Time the Benefit of *free* Trade and Commerce in order to your gaining a *good Estate* to maintain you in your own *Native Country*, when ever you are forced to return; would you be so indiscreet as to lay out all the Product of your *Merchandize* in building *fine* Houses, and purchasing *great* Farms, when you know not how soon you may be commanded to depart and leave all the *immovable* Goods behind you? Or rather would you not think your selves obliged by all the Rules of Interest and Discretion to convert all your Gain into *portable* Wealth, into Money or Jewels or other such *moveable* Commodities, as, when ever you are forced to depart, you might carry Home along with you, and there maintain your selves with them in many years *Ease* and *Plenty*? Do but think then, and think it often, that while you live *here* you are but *Strangers* and *Foreign Merchants*; that you came *hither* from *another*, World, to which you know

know not how soon you may be forced to return; that all the Wealth, the Lands and Houses you gain by your *present* Commerce are *immoveable Goods* which you must leave behind you when you go from *hence*, and that there is nothing portable of all that you can gain in this World but only the *Graces* and *Virtues* of your Minds, and that therefore while you have Opportunity it concerns you above all Things to store and treasure up a *plentiful* Portion of these; that so whenever you are *shipt off* into the *eternal* World you may carry such an *Estate* of them thither with you as may suffice to maintain you there in *Glory* and *Happiness* for ever; which God of his infinite Mercy grant.

I JOHN III. 9.

Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.

FOR the right understanding of these Words, it will be *necessary* to enquire, *first*, what is here meant by *committing Sin*; *secondly*, what is meant by being *born of God*; *thirdly*, in what sense he that is *born of God* cannot *commit sin*.

First, What is *here* meant by *committing sin*? I answer, that this *Phrase* in the Writings of this our *Apostle* hath a special *Energy*, and doth not denote the *simple* doing of any *sinful* Action, tho' it be out of Ignorance, Incogitance, or Frailty; nor doth it only denote an *habitual* Course and Custom of sinning *wilfully*, but primarily the doing of any *sinful* Action whatsoever *deliberately*, *wilfully*, and *presumptuously*. For as for the *first*, it is not true that he that is *born of God* doth commit no *sin* at all; seeing the *best* of God's Children are liable to be surpriz'd into *evil* Actions through their Weakness, Ignorance, or Inadvertency, of all which, there

there are *some* Remains even in the most purified Natures. And as for the *second*, viz. the *habit* of sinning wilfully, tho' that in the Apostles Sense is not only to *commit sin*, but to commit it in the most *eminent* Degree; yet it is plain, that it is the *deliberate* Acts of Sin that he here primarily intends: for so Verse the 4th *he that committeth sin transgresseth the Law, for Sin is a Transgression of the Law*; which is plainly meant of every *single* Act of wilful Sin. So ver. 8. *he that committeth sin is of the Devil*, that is, he is therein an Imitator of the Devil, which is true of every *deliberate* Act, as well as of the *Habit* of Sin. So here in the Text, *he that is born of God doth not commit sin*; that is, understanding him still in the same Sense, he doth not commit any *wilful* and *deliberate* Act of Sin.

2. Our *next* Enquiry is, what is *here* meant by *being born of God*? To which I answer, that to be *born of another*, denotes in general our recovering the Beginning and Principle of our Life and Motion from him, and consequently to be *born of God*, is to receive from *him* through the Operation of his *Grace* and *Spirit*, the Beginning and Principle of our *spiritual* Life and Motion, viz. a *considerate, universal, prevailing* Resolution to obey God, proceeding from our Belief of the *Christian* Religion. When

therefore God by the Influence of his *Grace* and *Spirit* hath wrought *our* Minds into *such* a Resolution, then are we truly born of him, as having herein received from him the Principle of a *new* Life and Motion. And this the Apostle expresses by *being transformed by the renewing of our Mind*, Rom. 12. 2. *i.e.* having a *new practical* Judgment and Resolution of Soul begotten in us; and this he elsewhere calls *the renewing of the holy Ghost*, Tit. 3. 5. Upon which account we may very well be said to to be *born of God*; because it is from his *blessed Spirit* that we derive *this Renewing*, which is the Principle of our *spiritual* Life and Motion.

Our *last* Enquiry is in what Sense *this* Assertion of the Apostle holds, *viz.* That he who is *thus born of God cannot sin*? To which I answer, That this Expression, *he cannot*, relates to the state he is *now* in; he *cannot*, as he is *one* that is born of God, and while he doth continue so; for so the *Phrase* is frequently used in *Scripture*. So Rom. 8. 7. *The carnal mind cannot be subject to God*; not but the Mind which is *now* carnal, may *hereafter* be subject unto God, *viz.* when it is *renewed and changed*; but it cannot be so while it continues *carnal*. And in the same Sense he tells us in the next Verse, that *it cannot please God*. So Mat. 7. 18, *a good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit, neither can a corrupt Tree bring*

bring forth good Fruit; which can import no more than this, that whilst the *good Tree* continues good, it cannot bring forth *evil Fruits*, nor the *corrupt Tree* bring forth *good Fruits* whilst it continues corrupt; not but that *one* may *hereafter* become *evil*, and bring forth *evil Fruits*, as well as the *other* may become a *good Tree*, and bring forth *good Fruits*. So that the meaning of *he cannot sin*, is no more than this, it is so utterly inconsistent with the State of *one* that is *born of God*, to sin wilfully and deliberately, that whenever he doth so, he actually falls from that *blessed State*, and for the time ceases to be *born of God*. And hence the Reason assigned why a Man cannot sin wilfully, and be *born of God* at the same Time, is, *for his Seed remaineth in him*; that is, because that Principle of *new Life and Motion*, which the *divine Spirit* hath produced in him, and which is nothing else but an *universal, prevailing Resolution* of obeying *God*, remains within his Breast, and for a Man to be *universally and prevalently* resolved to obey *God*, and at the same Time to sin *wilfully* is a *Contradiction in Terms*; because whenever he sins *wilfully*, he is prevalently resolved to disobey him. And therefore seeing in every *wilful Sin* we are *prevalently* resolved to disobey *God*, while we are so, our Resolution to obey him,

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which is the Seed and Principle of our *divine* Life, must *necessarily* be extinguished ; and consequently, till such time as by our Repentance we have revived and recovered it, we must cease to be *born of God*. He therefore who is *born of God*, cannot *sin wilfully*, because while he continues in *this State his Seed remains in him* ; which is no more reconcilable to our *sinning wilfully*, than *contraries* are in the *same Degree*. And therefore he adds, *he cannot sin, because he is born of God* ; that is, his State is such as will no more admit him wilfully to disobey God, than to be *dead and alive* in the *same Moment*. But in pursuance of this Argument, it will be necessary yet further to enquire what those *wilful Sins* are which the Apostle here declares to be inconsistent with a *good State*, or which is the same thing, with our *being born of God* ; the Resolution of which is of *absolute necessity* to enable Men to make a *true Judgment* of their own State, whether it be *good or bad*. And in order hereunto it will be necessary to premise the following Particulars,

1. That by *wilful Sin*, I mean the *Acts* as well as the *Habits* of Sin.
2. That by *wilful Habits of Sin*, I mean such as are contracted by *wilful Acts*, and are wilfully retained and indulged.

3. That

3. That by *wilful* Acts of Sin, I do not mean all *evil* Actions which have any Degree of *Will* in them, but only such as are deliberately chosen.

4. That the *same* Actions may be Sins of *Weakness*, and Sins of *Wilfulness* in the *same*, or *different* Persons under *different* Circumstances.

1. That by *wilful* Sins, I mean the *wilful* Acts as well as *Habits* of Sin. To be sure there is no Sin can be consistent with our being *born of God*, for which the *Gospel* binds us over to *eternal* Condemnation; for while we *thus* stand bound, we are Children of *Wrath*, and so cannot be Children of *God* at the same time. Now the Law of *Christ* condemns us for all *wilful* Sins whatsoever, whether they be *single* Acts or *Habits*; and every *single* *wilful* Act is as much a Transgression of the Law, which threatens Condemnation, as any *wilful* Habit whatsoever. The Law, which forbids *wilful* Lying under the Penalty of *eternal* Death, doth as well forbid the *single* Act, as the Habit of *wilful* Lying, and therefore must forbid them both under the same Penalty; and indeed if it did not, there are some of the most *heinous* sins would escape. For there are *some* Sins which when Men have *once* committed, they never have Opportunity to repeat, being prevented either for want of a *new* Occasion,

or by *just* Sentence of Law ; such as *Rape*, and *Theft*, and *Murther* ; and *others*, which can never pass beyond a *single* Act, such as *Parricide* and *Self-murther* ; and so can never grow into an *Habit* : and yet I think there is no Man can doubt but that even the *single Acts* of these Sins (supposing them wilful) do put a Man into a *state* of Condemnation. I know it is usually said, that such *horrible* Sins as *these* indeed do so, because the Mischief of them is *so* great, and the Malice *so* heinous that it renders them *equivalent* to an *Habit* of any other Sin. To which I answer, the Law of *Christ* condemns these *Sins*, not as they are greater than *others*, but as they are Transgressions for which it threatens Condemnation. Indeed the greatness of the *Sin* doth increase the Condemnation ; but yet the Law which condemns us for a *lesser* Sin, doth as certainly condemn us, as *that* which condemns us for a *greater*. As for Instance, the Law of *Christ* as well condemns us for *Drunkenness*, *Adultery*, *Lying*, and *Malice*, as for *Murther*. And as every *wilful Act* of *unjust* Killing, is *Murther* ; so every *wilful Act* of *Adultery* and *Malice*, is *Adultery* and *Malice* ; and therefore the Law of *Christ* condemns to far *greater* Pains for the *one* than for the *other* ; yet still it condemns us for both : for that Law, which forbids any *wilful* Sin indifferently under the

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Penalty of Condemnation, forbids every *Act* of it under the *same* Penalty; because every *Act* of it is the Sin so forbidden; and therefore we may as well say, that the Law of *Christ* doth not condemn us for *Parricide* and *Self-murther*, because these are only *single Acts* of Murther, as that it doth not condemn us for any other *single Act* of any other *wilful* Sin. For every *single Act* of *wilful* Intemperance and Incontinency, are as truly *Sins* against the Law, which forbids them under the Penalty of *eternal* Condemnation, as those *single Acts* of Murther are against the Law which forbids Murther under the same Penalty; and consequently do as well put us into a State of Condemnation; and to be sure, while we are in *this* state, we cannot pretend to be *born of God*.

2. I premise that by *wilful Habits* of sin, are meant *such* as are contracted by *wilful Acts*, and are wilfully retained, and indulged. For if you take *Habits* of Sin in the *largest* Sense, as they signifie a *forward* Propensity, Promptness, and Readiness to do Evil, there is no doubt but there may be *sinful* Habits in Men, which never were contracted by *wilful Acts*, as on the contrary, there may be *sinful Habits* contracted by *wilful Acts*, which tho' not utterly extirpated, may yet cease to be wilful. As for instance, a Man may be prompted to *unreason-
able*

noble Anger, or *excessive Lust*, even from the *natural Temper* and *Constitution* of his *Body*, without the *Concurrence* of any *wilful Acts* of his own ; and tho' he may be much more disposed to be angry or lustful than *another* of a *cooler Constitution*, yet he may be much farther removed from any *wilful Habit* of Anger and Lust, because the *latter* perhaps contracted them by his own *wilful Acts*, and by his continued Practice of them, doth still cherish and indulge them ; whereas the *former* had no more hand in contracting them, than he had in the moulding of *his own Constitution*, and is so far from cherishing them by any *wilful Acts* of his own, that it is the *main* endeavour of his Life to oppose and vanquish them. And so on the other hand, a Man that by frequent *wilful Acts* of Sin, hath contracted *wilful Habits*, may afterwards heartily repent, and take up a *prevailing Resolution* of Amendment, and yet still the *evil Habit*, the *Promptness*, or *Propensity* to his Sin, may be more or less remaining in him ; but this is *now* so far from being *wilful*, that the prevailing Bent and Current of his Will is against it ; and tho' still his *evil Inclinations* are ready to take fire upon every *Spark* of Temptation that falls upon them, and to blaze out into *evil Actions* ; yet by the Strength of his Resolution he *so* keeps it under, that it cannot

break forth but upon a surprize, and even *that* Surprize will render him more *watchful* and *vigilant* to suppress it for the future. But now when *evil Habits* do not only exist *in* us, but are also cherished and indulged by us, and do ordinarily influence and govern our Practice; they are then not only *wilful* Sins, but a *fixt* and *settled* State of *wilful* Sins; and are pregnant with a *distinct* Guilt and Venom from those *Acts* of *wilful* Sin, that begot them. And hence in Scripture you find them markt with the *blackest* Characters; they are called, *the Root of bitterness, the evil Heart, the Concupiscence wrought by Sin, the Law in the Members*, which those who are *carnal* and *sold under Sin* do obey, *the carnal Mind, the Flesh in which dwells no good, and enmity to God*: by all which they are *sufficiently* pronounced inconsistent with our being *born of God*.

3. I must premise that by *wilful Acts of Sin* I do not mean all *wilful* Actions which have any Degree of *Will* in them, but only such as are *deliberately* chose and consented to. Every *sin* is so far *voluntary*, as that when we choose it we are free to refuse it; otherwise it is *necessary*; and what is *necessary*, is no Fault, nor can be justly liable to *Reward, or Punishment*. Those *evil* Actions therefore, which, for Distinction sake, are called *sins of Infirmary*, are no farther
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Sins than as they are chosen, and have some Intermixture of Will in them ; for if they have none, they have only the *Matter* of Sin in them, but not the *Form*. But we are seldom so surprized with any Temptation to *Evil*, but that it is possible for us to deliberate upon it ; and thereupon to resolve against it ; and many Times by our Care and Watchfulness we do prevent those *Evils*, which, when we are more remiss, do steal upon us *unawares* : and we that can prevent them *this* Moment, can prevent them the *next* too, and so the next, and so for ever. But then considering the *Weakness* and *Imperfection* of our Natures, how our *Wills* are byassed with *bad* Habits and Inclinations, and our *Thoughts* dispersed and squander'd among the *infinite* Diversions that surround us ; it is morally impossible, that is, it is not reasonably to be expected that in these Circumstances we should be *always* upon our Guard against every *evil* Object *without*, and every *evil* Motion *within* us, so as never to be surprized, or to act unadvisedly. Whenever therefore we are so surprized into an *evil* Action, as that we could not consider if we would, either for Want of Time, or for Want of *Order* and *Distinction* in our Thoughts occasioned by some *sudden* Tumult of Passion ; *this* is not our Fault, but our Infelicity ; because our *Will* is no way

concerned in it. But when we are so surprized, as that notwithstanding we might have considered, had we taken all *due* Care to recollect *our selves* and exert our *utmost* Attention ; *this* is partly *our* Fault; because there is something of Will in it ; but more *our* Infelicity, because there is more of Weakness and Infirmary than Will in it; and therefore is called a *sin of Infirmary*, which by the *merciful* Indulgence of the *Gospel* is discharged of Course from all *eternal* Penalties. But if when we are tempted, we either designedly omit to consider, or consent upon Consideration ; this is *pure* Malice of Will, which, while we are *born of God*, can have no Place in us.

4. And lastly, I must premise, that the same Actions may be *Sins of Weakness* and *Sins of Wilfulness* in the *same*, or in *different* Persons under different Circumstances. For seeing it is the *willing* of an *evil* Action that makes it be a sin, it necessarily follows, that it is the *willing* of it in a *greater* or a *lesser* Degree that makes it a *greater* or a *lesser* Sin ; and it is certain that the same sin may have *more* or *less* of Will in it in the *same*, or *different* Persons under different Circumstances. As for Instance ; *one* Man may be excusably ignorant of the *Evil* of such an Action, which *another* doth either know to be a Sin, or would have known it had he
not

not been wilfully ignorant ; and that Sin, which *this* Man commits upon Deliberation, *another* may be hurried into on a suddain surprize, in which Case, tho' both do the same Act, and in some Sense both do it willingly too, yet because the *one* wills it more intensely than the *other*, it is a *Sin of Wilfulness* in the *one*, and a *Sin of Infirmary* in the *other*. And this holds true also in the *same* Person, who may do the *same* Action ignorantly and inconsiderately at *one* Time, and knowingly and advisedly at *another* ; and if, when he hath fallen into any Sin unawares, he is wilfully careless and neglective to prevent the Return of it ; that which *now* is a *pitiab*le Weakness, and as such falls under the *general* Indulgence of the Gospel, will *anon* be *inexcusable* Obstinacy. From all which it is apparent, that it is not the Kind of the Sin, but the *Will* of the Sinner that makes the Difference between *Sins of Weakness* and *Wilfulness* ; seeing the same Sins according to the *different* Degrees of Will that are in them may be *Sins of Infirmary* at *one* time, and *Sins of Obstinacy* at *another*. For so by the *Law of England* the same Act of Killing is distinguished into *Chance-medly*, *Manslaughter*, and *Murther* ; the *first* of which is *innocent*, because it hath no Will in it ; the *second* *pitiab*le, because but imperfectly willed ; the *third* *capital* ;

pital, because freely chosen, and fully con-
 sented to. And so also by the *Christian Law*
 the very same Act under *different* Circum-
 stances may be an *innocent* Error, a *sin of*
Infirmity, and a *sin of Wilfulness*; for if it
 be perfectly *involuntary*, it is an *innocent*
Error; if imperfectly *willed*, it is a *sin of*
Infirmity; but if fully consented to, a *sin*
of Wilfulness. So long therefore as the
 Temptations of Men are so infinitely *vari-*
ous, and their Capacities of resisting so *un-*
equal, in different Persons, there will be
more or less of Will in the *same* Actions;
 and the same Act will be far more excusa-
 ble where there is a *greater* Temptation to
 it, and a *less* Power of resisting, then it
 can be, when the Temptation is *less*, and
 the Power of resisting it *greater*. All that
 can be done therefore in the Case before
 us is this, to lay down such *general* Rules
 of Distinction between *Sins of Infirmity*,
 and *Sins of Wilfulness*, as that thereby eve-
 ry Man, that hath the *free* Use of *his own*
 Faculties may, upon a *due* Consideration
 of his *Particular* Circumstances, distinguish
 whether his *Sin* be *wilful* or no. For when
 all is done every Man must thus far be *his*
own Casuist; it being impossible for *another* to
 determine what Degrees of *Will* there are in
 his Sin, unless he knew under what Circum-
 stances he committed it; because *different*
 Circum-

Circumstances do vary the Case, and make the Sin be *more* or *less* voluntary.

These Things premised, I come now particularly to state what those Sins are, upon the Commission of which we cease to be *born of God*: and these I shall rank under 3 Heads: 1. Sins of *wilful* Ignorance. 2. Sins of *wilful* Inconsideration. 3. Sins against *Knowledge* and *Consideration*.

1. Sins of *wilful* Ignorance; I say wilful, to exclude all *invincible* and *unaffected* Ignorance: By *invincible* Ignorance I mean such, as we neither do nor can surmount by the *utmost* Improvement we can make of our Reason. For sure not to understand, *what* we cannot understand, is not at all *criminal*; and if our Ignorance be *innocent*, whatever is the *necessary Effect* of it must be so too; all *necessary Effects* being of a *common* Nature with their *Causes*. And certainly no Man breathing can be innocent, if he be not so who acts to the *best* of his Knowledge, and knows to the *best* of his Capacity. For so our Saviour himself pronounces concerning the Pharisees; *If ye were blind ye should have no sin, but now you say that you see, therefore your sin remains*, John 9. 4.

By *unaffected* Ignorance I mean such as is *vincible*, but by Reason of some *innocent* Hindrances, such as the Obscurity of the *Object*, or the Weakness of the *Capacity*, or the

the *innocent* Prejudice and Prepossession of the *Understanding*, is not to be removed without *extreme* Difficulty; which tho' it be so far sinful, as it is within the *Reach* of our Power to be better informed; yet is by no Means to be accounted a *wilful* Sin. For if it be *wilful* Sin not to know and do the Will of *God* to the *utmost* of our Power, there is no Sin in the World but what is *wilful*; because it is no Sin at all not to do more than our utmost. But then there is a *wilful* and *affected* Ignorance, which proceeds either from our *prophane* Contempt and *Regardlessness* of *God*, by which we have so far extinguished our *natural* Sense of *Religion*, as not to think it *worth* the while to concern our selves about it, and so rudely stop our Ears against all the *Means* of Instruction; or else this *wilful* Ignorance arises from some *sinful* Prejudice against the Knowledge of the Truth begotten in us by some *darling* Lust, which, that we may quietly enjoy without any *Remorse* of Conscience, we industriously shun all the *Means* of Conviction; and either exclude all Thoughts of *Religion* from our Minds lest they should discover to us the *Evil* and *Danger* of our Sin, (which is the way of those who are openly *prophane*, and *irreligious*;) or endeavour to wheedle our own Understandings to such *false* Opinions as are *soft* and

and *easy* and *indulgent* to our Lusts, (which is the way of *Hypocrites* and *false Pretenders to Religion*.) Now as for this Sort of Ignorance, it springs from a *wicked Will*, and is not so much to be imputed to the *Weakness* of our Understandings, as to the *Depravedness* of our Affections; they are the *impure Vapours* from *below* that cloud the Sky *above*, and overcast the *intellectual* Region with Darkness and Confusion. And if we are ignorant of our Duty, because we will not be informed; our Ignorance is so far from excusing our Neglect of it, that it self is *inexcusable*. If I commit a Sin, because I am wilfully ignorant, the Wilfulness of my Ignorance makes my Sin to be *wilful*. Here the *Effect* always partakes of the Nature of the *Cause*, and derives into its self all its Venom and Malignity; and therefore if my Ignorance be a *wilful Sin*, whatever Sins it betrays me into, they must be *all* wilful as well as that. And hence our *Saviour* tells us, that this *is the condemnation*, that *light is come into the world*, and *men love darkness rather than light*, John 3. 19.

2. Another Sort of *wilful Sins* are Sins of *wilful Inconsideration*. I say wilful, because there are sundry *Evils* whereinto we are perfectly surprized; as when Temptations start out so suddainly upon us, as that either for Want of Time, or the *great Hurry and Tumult*

Tumult it puts our Thoughts into, it is not in our Power to consider and deliberate; in which Case we are not *capable* Subjects of *Law* and *Morality*. For that which makes us *capable* Subjects is first, that we are *rational* Agents, and so can deliberate what is best to choose. 2. That we are *free* Agents, and so can choose what is *best* upon Deliberation; without which *Madmen* and *natural Fools* are as *capable* Subjects of *Law* as we. Whenever therefore our Circumstances are such that we cannot deliberate, and choose upon Deliberation, tho' the Actions we do are *materially* Evils, yet are they not *formally* Sins; because while we do them we are not *capable* Subjects of the *Law* that forbids them, nor consequently accountable to it. As for Instance; it is doubtless a *great* Sin and deserves a *great* Punishment, for a Man to wound his *Friend*, or abuse his *Benefactor*; but yet in a *Madman* it is no Sin at all, because when he doth it, he is incapable of being governed by the *Law* that forbids it. And this I judge is the Case of Men under *perfect* surprizes, when they are violently hurried into *evil* Actions in a *sudden* Distraction and Confusion of Thoughts; which doubtless may sometimes be the Case of very *good* Men, especially under *great* Pains, or the *sudden* Appearance of *frightful* Dangers, which

For the *present* at least may distract and scare them out of all Capacity and Deliberation; and at *other* Times, while their Thoughts are *innocently* wandering among the *vast* Variety of *outward* Objects, a Temptation may suddainly break in, and prevail upon them before they have Time to recollect themselves. For we find by Experience, that the *Mind* hath not that *absolute* Dominion over the *Will* as to make it choose or refuse at its beck upon the *bare* Proposal of *good* or *evil* Objects; but many Times before it can prevail is fain to dispute it *out* with our Passions and Appetites, and to oppose their Importunities with more *prevalent* Motives to the contrary; and therefore if it should so fall out that in that Moment when the Temptation comes, the Mind shall be very much *diverted* by *other* Employments, it is in many Cases *morally* impossible, but *Passion* and *Appetite* should prevail, and obtain our Consent before the *Mind* is aware of it; because *that* being at present otherwise employed; and always *unable* to attend *many* Things at once, it cannot be ready in the *present* Exigence immediately to urge the Arguments on its *own* side, and to detect the Fallacies on the *other*. Tho' this I confess, will hardly hold in any *gross* Acts of Sin, because in these there is generally some *Pause* and *Interval* between the Temptation

ptation and the Action, where in the Mind may easily be advised with, which if it be a *good* Mind cannot fail to suggest *sufficient* Arguments against it: But if the Temptation doth so hurry the Man, as that he cannot deliberate, he is *so* far *innocent*; and if as soon as he considers he retracts the *evil* Consent into which his Will was surpris'd, before it passes into Action; or if having acted it, before he was *aware*, he becomes more *wary* and *watchful* for the future, it is not so much his Fault as his Misery. 'Tis true, there are surprizes of Temptations which are not *innocent*; but then the Reason *is*, because they are not *pure* surprizes, but such as do not incapacitate us to deliberate; and if when it is in our power we either do not deliberate at all, or not enough, but make a *rash* and *foolish* Choice, when, if we had used our *utmost* Care, we might have chosen more advisedly; our Choice is *culpable*, and so is the Action thence proceeding. But seeing ours is the *Religion* of *Men* and not of *Angels*, and it cannot reasonably be expected, considering our Circumstances, that we should *always* do as well as possibly we can, it is to be supposed that this *Religion* of ours, which is purposely accommodated to our *imperfect* State, admits us to be *good* in the *Main*, tho' we are not so to *Perfection*, or which is the same Thing,

to the *utmost* of our Possibility. For while our Soul is fain to minister to a Body, and hath so *quick* a sense of its Necessities, and while we are compassed with so *vast* a Variety of *tempting* Objects, and our Thoughts are so dispersed and squandred among them; it is *morally* impossible, but that *many* of our Actions should be *unadvised*, and pass our Watch without a *severe* Examination: nor can it reasonably be expected, that we should in all Cases, where it is in our Power, so precisely weigh every *minute* Circumstance of our Actions, as to determine exactly on which side our duty lies; and therefore should our *Religion* exact *this* of us without *any* Mitigation or Abatement, I doubt that even the *best* of Men would never be able to abide the Test of it. But then besides this Kind of Inconsideration, which is either purely *involuntary*, and by consequence *innocent*, or but partly *voluntary*, and so *excusable*; there is *another* Sort of it, which is absolutely and *inexcusably* *misful*. And *This* is twofold, *viz.* *actual* and *habitual*. Actual is either when, notwithstanding we have been sufficiently forewarned by *precedent* Surprizes, we are *misfully* neglective of *our selves*, and take no Care to fortify our Minds by *Consideration* against them in Case they should return again upon us; or when upon the
Appear-

Appearance of a *prevailing* Temptation we either quench the *good* Motions of *our own* Consciences, and refuse to consider the *Evil* and *Danger* of the Sin we are tempted to, lest we should be deterred from committing it; or purposely contrive to baffle *our own* Consideration and to render it ineffectual by opposing against it either some *ungrounded* Hope of Impunity, or some *fallacious* Promise of future Amendment. In all which Cases our *Inconsideration* is apparently *wilful*, and so consequently must the Sins be, which follow upon it; and he who pleads his own *wilful Inconsideration* as an Excuse for his Sin, doth only *Apologize* for one Fault by *another*, which instead of extenuating *inflames* and *aggravates* it. And then as for *habitual Inconsideration* it is the Effect of our *frequent* stifling the Convictions of *our own* Consciences, whereby we fear them into a *deep* Insensibility of *Good* and *Evil*, so as that at last we Sin on without Remorse, and return to our Lusts with a *perfect* Indifferency without ever considering what we do, or reflecting upon what we have done. Now as it is no excuse for *our* Sin if it proceeds from a *sinful* Habit contracted by frequent Acts of *wilful* Sin, so neither will it excuse our Sin that it proceeds from an *habitual Inconsideration* contracted by *often* refusing to consider. And

as *vicious Habits* have a *proper Evil* and *Guiltiness* in them distinct from those *vicious Acts* that produce them, so *habitual Inconsideration* hath in it a *peculiar Venom* of its own beyond what was in those *wilful Acts of Inconsideration* whereby it was contracted. And accordingly in *Scripture* it is described as the most *desperate State* of Sinners: it is to be *past feeling*, which was the *Condition* of the *leudest* and most *irreclaimable Gentiles*, *Eph. 4. 19.* it is to have a *sear'd conscience*, the *Character* of Sinners under the *last Apostacy*, *1 Tim. 4. 2.* it is to have a *reprobate Mind*, which was the *Cause* and *Effect* of the *foulest Gentile Impieties*, *1 Rom. 28, 29.* In a word it is to have a *hard and unrelenting Heart*, by which Men are said to *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, *Rom. 2. 5.*

3. And lastly, another Sort of *wilful Sins* are such as are wilfully committed against *Knowledge* and *Consideration*. I say again wilfully, to exclude those *known Evils*, which either we do not at all consent to, or very imperfectly. For it is a *known Evil* for a Man to *rove* in his Devotions, or to think *blasphemous Thoughts* of God, or to be *drowsy* and *listless* in our Addresses to him; and yet many times these are the *necessary Effects* even of *innocent Causes*, such as *Melancholy*, or *Weariness*, or *antecedent Thoughtfulness*; and

and therefore tho' they are *evil* in the Matter, yet because they necessarily proceed from such Causes as are not *evil*, we are no more accountable for them than for the *Returns* of our Appetite, or the *Palpitation* of our Heart: and if we do not indulge our *Drowsiness*, nor harbour and entertain our *evil* Thoughts, but throw them out of our Minds as soon as we observe them, and keep a more *careful* Watch to prevent their Return, our Will is *innocent*, and so long we may be sure *God* will not condemn us for our Weakness. Again, it is a *known* Evil for a Man to be angry *without a Cause*, or to have an *unchast* Desire, or to *love*, or *hate*, or *hope*, or *fear*, or *rejoyce*, or *grieve* unreasonably; yet these Evils are such as *no* Care can wholly prevent, and against which *no* Watchfulness is a *sufficient* Guard. And tho' in many of these Instances there be many times *so much* of our Will intermingled as to render us culpable, yet this is not sufficient to extinguish the Principle of our *Regeneration*, or to degrade us into a State of *Wickedness*. But when a Man knows that such an Action is *evil*, and either *actually* considers that it is so, or neglects to consider it through *habitual Inconsideration*, and thereupon actually consents to it; he doth hereby *openly* defy *God*, and maliciously trample upon his Authority, being

desperately resolved to pursue his *sinful* Desire let God and his Conscience say what they can to the contrary ; which is such an Height of wilful Malice as no *Apology* can extenuate. Hence our Saviour pronounces that *the servant that knows his Masters will, and doth it not shall be beaten with many stripes,* Luke 12. 47. And accordingly St. James tells us, that he that *knows to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin* ; that is, 'tis a very great and *inexcusable* Sin, James 4. 17. and St. Paul assures us that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness* ; that is, who know the Truth, and yet wilfully sin against their Knowledge, Rom. 1. 18. and to name no more Heb. 10. 26. we are told, that *if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin* ; which Words are to be understood according to the general Analogy of the Gospel [*if we sin wilfully*] i. e. if we are deliberately guilty of any known Sin [*after we have received the knowledge of the truth*] i. e. have been catechized and baptized in the Christian Faith [*there remains no more sacrifice for sin*] i. e. unless we recover our selves by Repentance, and Amendment of the Fact. And seeing that where we sin wilfully the Vertue of the
great

great sacrifice for Sin hath no Place without a special and particular Repentance, and consequently there is no other Remedy left for us in the Gospel, all that remains is what follows in the next verse, viz. a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery indignation to devour the adversary. From whence it follows that upon our sinning knowingly and wilfully in any particular Instance, we fall into a State of Wrath and Condemnation, and consequently fall from the happy State of our Regeneration, or being born of God.

And now to conclude this Argument, from the whole I infer the horrible Evil of consenting to any known Sin, after we have entered into good Resolutions to the contrary; which will plainly appear upon the following Considerations.

1. Consider the shameful Weakness and Impotency of it. For such Resolutions, if they are well formed, are grounded on the strongest and most momentous Reasons in the world; and for a Man to Cancel a Resolution enforced with such powerful Motives for a meer Vanity, or to gratify some foolish and importunate Lust, the Pleasure of which dyes away in the Enjoyment, argues him to have a base and prostitute Mind, that hath no Strength of Thought, or steadfastness of Will in it, but is wiffled up and down like a Feather in the Air by every little Counterblast of Wind.

2. Con-

2. Consider the *prodigious* Hazard to which we expose our selves by it. For by every *wilful Sin* after *such* a Resolution we throw our selves headlong from the *best* into the *worst* Estate in the world, from a State of *Love* into a State of *Wrath*, from being *born of God* to being a *Son of perdition*; and if we thence be snatched away, before we have recovered our Relapse, (as who knows but we may,) we shall dye *for ever*, and by one *desperate* Act of Folly fall from Heaven into Hell. But suppose we should *survive* our Sin, and be allowed a space of Repentance; yet is it a *mighty* Hazard whether ever we make a *good* Use of it. For when by one *wilful Sin* we have made a Breach into our *good* Resolution, in all probability *that* will open a Gap for *another* to follow, and *that* for *another*, till hereby our *evil* Habits at last recover their *full* Power, and then our *Will* and *Practice* will be laid open again into a common *Thoroughfare* of Iniquity. For when we consented to the *first* Sin it was with a Promise of repenting immediately, and upon the *same* Promise in all probability upon the next Temptation we shall consent to a *second*, and so to a *third*; and by this Train the *Devil* will tole us *on* through a *long* Course of Sin, till at length our *Will* is *depraved* again, and our Conscience *seared*, and then

we

we shall lay aside all Thoughts of Repentance.

3. Consider the *great* Sorrow and Remorse that must follow upon our Sin, in Case we should repent of it. For to be *sure* before we can heartily repent of it, our Mind must be stung with many *severe* Reflections upon our own *wretched* Weakness and Impotence, and our Falseness and Perfidiousness to our *own* Engagements and Resolutions, upon the Affront we have given to our *good* God, and the *vile* Contempt we have offer'd to his most *righteous* Authority, and our ungrateful grieving his *holy Spirit*, whereby, before we committed this Wickedness, we were *sealed unto the day of Redemption*: all which if we have any thing of *good* Nature and Ingenuity, and much more if we have any the *least* Foot-step or Remains of that *divine Seed*, by which we were *born of God*, must necessarily create in us a most *pungent* Sorrow and Remorse, whenever we reflect upon it; a Sorrow that will be much *more* than *equivalent* to the *highest* Pleasure we can hope for from any *wilful Sin*: and for a Man to commit such a Sin upon a Presumption that he shall repent of it, when he cannot but foresee, if he be in his Wits, that his Repentance will cost him far *more sorrow* than his sin will yield him *Pleasure*, is all Folly and Madness.

4. Con-

4. Consider how much of *that* Ground we lose back by every *wilful Sin* which by hitherto keeping true to our *good Resolution* we had gotten against our *evil Inclinations*. Our *Religion* can never be easy to us till in some good Measure we have *mortified* and *extinguished* our *depraved Inclinations*; for till then in the whole Course of our *Religious Practice* we shall row against the Stream, and be continually warring against and doing Violence to *our selves*. But if when a Man hath once entered into a *good Resolution* he takes care to pursue it, he will find by degrees his *bad Inclinations decay* and wear off; and proportionably, as they decay; *Piety* and *Virtue* will grow *more* and *more* natural and easy to him. But when a Man hath for some time faithfully pursued his *good Resolution*, and hath thereby got a great deal of Ground of his *bad Inclinations*, if then he unravels it by any one *wilful Act* of Sin, his *bad Inclinations* will thereby recover all those Degrees of Strength and Vigour which they lost in the *past* Course of his *Piety* and *Virtue*; so that now he must be forced to begin the *whole* Work of his *Religion* again, and to struggle through all those Difficulties, which he had before surmounted. Now he must fight over again all the Victories he had gotten, before he can regain *that* Command
and

and *Empire* of himself, to which he was arrived before he revolted from his *good Resolution*; and thus for a *Moments* Satisfaction he foolishly creates himself a *long* and *tedious* Labour.

5. And lastly consider how by every *wilful Sin* you will *weaken* and *impair* those *comfortable* Hopes you had arrived to by persevering in your *good Resolution*. While you persevere in *Well-doing*, your Minds will be all a long entertained and refreshed with the *growing* Hopes of your Reconciliation with God at present, and of a *glorious* Immortality to succeed; and those *blessed* Hopes will every Day improve upon your Hands, till at length they are *ripened* into a *full* Assurance; the Comfort of which will mightily *spirit* and *inliven* all your *Religious* Endeavours, and carry you on with *indefatigable* Vigour through all the *weary* Stages of your Duty. But now by committing of any *wilful Sin*, thereby you throw *your selves* out of the Arms of God's Favour, and give up all your Pretensions to *eternal* Happiness; and tho' by your *serious* Repentance you should afterwards recover to the *blessed* Condition from whence you are fallen, yet in all Probability it will be a great while before you will be able to recover those blessed Hopes from whence you are fallen. For the Sense of your *past*

Lapse,

Laps, if you have any *Modesty* in you, will make you very *anxious* and *doubtful* of your selves and render you extremely *fearful* and *suspicious*, lest you should fall again; and so only *sin* and *repent*, and *repent* and *sin* on, 'till at length you have sinned your selves beyond all *Repentance*; and these very *just* Fears and Jealousies will very much hinder the *Growth* of your Hopes, and cause them to spring by *slow* and *insensible* Degrees.

JOHN

JOHN XIV. 27.

*Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give
unto you: not as the World giveth, give
I unto you: Let not your Heart be trou-
bled, neither let it be afraid.*

THese Words are a Part of our Savi-
our's farewell Discourse to his Dis-
ciples, in which after he had gi-
ven them some *necessary* Instructi-
ons for the Information of their Faith, and
Conduct of their Manners, in which after
he had comforted them with the Assurance
that e'er long he would return again to
them by his *holy Spirit*, and assist them in
their Work, and support them under their
Troubles, he takes a *solemn* leave of them,
Peace I leave with you. Which among the
Hebrews was the usual Form of Salvation
when they met or parted, *Shalom Lacha*,
Peace be unto you; where, by *Peace*, they
meant all manner of *Blessings*; so that it was
equivalent to all those *Three* Salutations a-
mong the *Greeks* χαίρειν, εὐχαρίσταν, εὐτυχίαν,
in which they wished to each other Sa-
tisfaction of Mind, Health of Body, and Suc-
cess of Affairs. So that in this Salutation
Peace I leave with you, our Saviour wishes all
Good

Good to his Disciples, of which, *Peace* strictly taken, is one of the *principal* Instances. Nor, saith he, do I only wish *Peace* to you in general, but I give you *my Peace*; or the Wish and Salutation of *my Peace*; which is a much *better* Peace than that which Men have hitherto enjoyed, an *inward* Peace of Mind and Soul founded upon much *surer* Grounds and *better* Principles than those which *natural Reason* and *Philosophy* pretend to. And this *new* kind of Peace which is properly mine, because founded upon my Principles, *I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* The Men of the World give the Salutation of *Peace* to each *other* many times out of *meer* Complement, without any *real* Wish, or *heartly* meaning, and when they mean what they say, it is commonly nothing but an *empty* *impotent* Wish that conduces nothing, or at least, not enough to the Peace and Satisfaction of those whom they salute. But as for *my* part, as I give you the Salutation of Peace, so I heartily mean and wish that you may enjoy it; nor do I only wish you Peace, but I have also taken Care to furnish you with such *abundant* Means, and *effectual* Principles of Peace, as that if you are not extremely wanting to yourselves, you cannot long be without it. The Words thus Explained, the Sense of them may be resolved into this Proposition.

That

That our *blessed* Lord as he heartily wishes *Peace* and *Quiet* of Mind to all his Disciples and Followers, so he hath taken Care to furnish them with the most *sufficient* and *effectual* Means to obtain it: the Truth of which, evidently appears upon a full Consideration of these Two Particulars: *First*, that he hath taken the most *effectual* Care to remove from us all the Causes of *Trouble* and *Disquiet* of Mind. *Secondly*, that he hath taken Care to supply us with the most *effectual* Principles of *Peace* and *Satisfaction* of Mind.

1. I begin with the *first* of these, *viz.* that our *blessed* Lord hath taken the most *effectual* Care to remove from us all the Causes of *Trouble* and *Disquiet* of Mind; and they are principally these Five.

1. The Sense of *Guilt*.
2. *False* and *extravagant* Estimations of the *good* Things of the World.
3. Our taking up *wrong* Measures and Opinions of the *Evils* of the World.
4. An *effeminate* Softness and Delicacy of Temper.
5. Misplacing of our *Happiness* in Things that are out of *our own* Power.

1. One Cause of *disquiet* of Mind, is the Sense of *Guilt*. For God hath imprinted such an *awful* Apprehension of his own *invincible* Power and Majesty on our Minds, that

whenever we reflect upon the manifold Provocations we have given him, to arm his *Omnipotent Vengeance* against us, it must naturally suggest very *anxious* and *direful* Thoughts to our Minds, and fill us with *black* and *horrible* Apprehensions of the *fatal* Consequents of his Wrath and Displeasure against us. So that till such time as Men have stupified their *natural* Sense of *God* by a *long* Custom, and *inveterate* Habit of sinning, it will be as impossible for them to be at Peace under the Apprehension of his Displeasure, as it is to sleep with an *Alarm* in their Ears. But till such time as our *Saviour* had procured for us the *new Covenant*, by which *God* hath solemnly obliged himself to pardon us upon our Repentance; *sinful* Men, tho' *true* Penitents, could never have arrived at that Degree of Security, that *God* was reconciled to them, as is necessary to set their Minds at Rest, and free them from all Anxiety. For tho' to repent is the *best* thing a Sinner can do, yet this doth not at all alter the Nature of the *Sin* he repents of, so as to render it *less* evil, or *less* deserving of Punishment; and so long as the Desert of Punishment remains, *God* hath a *natural* Right to execute it, and so long we can never be certain whether he will exact it or no. Some *wavering* Hopes a *poor* Penitent might have arrived to, upon the Con-
sideration

sideration of the *infinite* Benignity of the *divine* Nature, but the utmost Comfort he could have given himself, was that of the *penitent* King of *Nineveh*; *who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Jonah 3. 9. But alas! when a Man's Mind is *hagg'd* and *ridden* with his Guilts, *who can tell?* is such a *poor* Relief as must necessarily leave it extremely anxious and disponding. But now upon our Saviour's procuring for us the *new* Covenant, you and I, and every one of us can tell, and that with as much certainty as that *God* is true, that if we do repent, and turn from our *evil* Ways, *God* will turn, and repent of his Anger, and Displeasure against us. So that now all we have to do is to reflect upon our selves, and examin whether we are *true* Penitents or no, whether we have submitted our Will to Gods, with a *full* Purpose and Resolution to fly whatever he forbids, and follow whatever he commands us; and if we have, we may upon the Terms of the *New Covenant*, from thence as certainly conclude that he is reconciled to us, and that his *high* Displeasure against us, is all converted into the *dearest* Kindness and Complacency, as we can that he is *God*, or which is all one, that he is *true* and *faithful*; which doubtless is one of the most *solid* Foundations of Peace and Satisfaction in the World.

World. For what can disturb me while I feel my self lodged in *his* Arms and Embraces whose Wisdom, I am sure, no *Craft* can out-wit, and with whose *Power* no *Force* is able to contend. Here I dwell as in an *impregnable* Fortrefs, where nothing can come at me, but what is for my *good*; how then can any thing prove *adverse* to me, while he is my *Friend*, in whose Hands and Disposal every thing that concerns me is placed?

2. Another Cause of Disquiet of Mind, is our *false* and *extravagant* Estimations of the *good* Things of this World. The main Spring of those Troubles which perplex our Minds, is the *Goods* and *Evils* that are without us, and without our Power and Disposal, in which we commonly fancy far more *Good* and *Evil* than really there is. We look upon the *good* Things of this World as *unskilful* Spectators do on *Landskips*, in which while they stand at a Distance, they fancy they behold *here* a *smiling* Meadow, *there* a *delightful* Grove, and *there* a *lofty* Mountain; but upon a *nearer* Approach, and more *considerate* View, find all this *goodly* Prospect to be nothing but a *coarse* Canvas artificially painted with Colours and Shadows. Thus while we behold the *Riches*, the *Pleasures*, and the *Honours* of this World at a Distance, to our *wild* Imaginations there appear *vast* Mountains of Happiness in them, *fruitful*
Fields

Fields of Pleasure, *delightful Groves* of Content and Satisfaction, which while we are in the pursuit of them, fills our Minds full of Cares, and *anxious* and *solicitous* Thoughts about them; but then as we approach nearer to them, and come to survey them more closely, the Mountains presently dwindle into *Mole-hills*, the Fields and the Groves into *empty* Shadows; and after all our Labour and Care to possess our selves of them, our *Enjoyment* of them amounts not to the *Tithe* of our *Hope*, and so we are still restless and unsatisfied, both while we are in the Quest, and while we are in the Possession of them. While we are in the Pursuit of them, we are *mild* and *imaginative*; we swell with *fantastick* Joys, and juggle our selves into Expectations as great and eager as *our own* Desires; but as soon as we are possessed of them, we presently find their Vanity and Emptiness, and perceiving how *little* they are able to perform of those *vast* Things they promised us, our *abused* Fancy that had raised it self with such *high* and *swelling* Expectations, falls flat underneath the Disappointments of Fruition, and so while we are following, we are restless, and when we have overtaken them, we are dissatisfied; all which arises from those *extravagant* Estimations we make of them. Whereas did we but value them as they are,

and according to the *true* Rules of *Reason* and *Religion*, we should pursue them with *far* more Indifference, and enjoy them with *far* more Content. While we are in pursuit of them, we should look upon them as Things without which we may be *happy*, and consequently as Things that have not worth enough in them to deserve of us any *mighty* Care or Solitude, and so we should follow them with a *calm* and *sedate* Mind; and entering into the Possession of them with a *moderate* Expectation, we should find every Thing in them, that we hoped for; for all the *Good* that they promised, they would be sure to perform, and so we should have no *disappointed* Hope to vex and disturb us, but our Expectation would be intirely satisfied in our Enjoyment. Thus would we take care to fix in our Minds a *true* Estimation of the *good* Things of this World, and to prize them at those Rates that our *Religion* sets upon them, they would never be able to give us half the Disturbance they now do; for then we should look upon them as Things that are *extrinsick* to our Happiness, as Things that we may want without Damage, or enjoy without Advantage to our main Interest; and esteeming them as such, we should pursue them with much *less* Concern, and enjoy them with much *more* Satisfaction; We should not be vexed with such an *impatient* Desire
of

of gaining them, nor alarmed with so many tormenting Fears of losing them; but with St. Paul we should know both *how to want* them, and *how to abound* in them, and to undergo both Fortunes with a *calm*, and *cheerful* Mind.

3. Another Cause of Disquiet of Mind, is our taking up *wrong* Measures and Opinions of the *Evils* of the World. As for those *Evils* which are only the Objects of our *Faith* and *Reason*, and such are the *eternal* *Evils* of the *other* World, we are always apt to lessen and diminish them, and flatter our selves with *soft* and *easy* Apprehensions of them; but as for those that strike upon our Sense, we are ever prone to swell and magnifie them; which is the reason that the *former* disquiet us *too* little, and the *latter* *too* much, tho' our Disquiet for the *one* is necessary to prevent them, whereas our Trouble for the *other* doth only serve to render them more grievous and oppressive. For the *greatest* Power these *outward* *sensible* *Evils* have to hurt and damnify us, they derive from *our own* Imagination, which oftentimes disguises them in *grim* and *frightful* Vizards, and makes them appear to us a Thousand Times more *terrible* than they are, insomuch that the Prospect and Apprehension is generally more *grievous* to us, than the Sense and Experience of them, and what we imagine in them, is far more than what

we feel. And thus we turn each *Whip* into a *Scorpion*, and swell our *Mole-hill* into a *Mountain* of Misery ; so that the greatest part of what we suffer, is generally of our own creating, because we suffer not only the *real* Evils which are in the Things themselves, but which are commonly more, the *fantastick* too which *our own* Imagination forms and affixes to them. So that would we but take Care to strip *Realities* from *Fantastick*, it would be impossible for those *Evils* which we feel or fear to give us half the Disturbance that they do ; and the only way for us to do this, is to take our Measures of these *outward* Evils from *Religion*, which will soon satisfy us that they are nothing near so *formidable* in themselves, as we imagine them. For as for Instance, what *mighty* Matter is there in the loss of these *outward* Goods which are all so *extrinsic* to our Happiness, which cannot help us in our *greatest* Needs, nor make us easie in their *fullest* Enjoyment, and which *Thousands* enjoy not, and yet are a Thousand Times more *happy* than those who possess them in the *greatest* Abundance ? Again, what *great Evil* is it for a Man to be contemned, and reproached, and vilified ? for as for these Things they are *Good* or *Evil* as we please to fancy them, and there is scarce any *other* Venom in them, than what *our own* Imagination doth

doth infuse. If we think them *great Evils*, they will be sure to vex and discompose us, which is the *greatest* Injury they can do us; but if we scorn and despise them, they are *impotent* Things, which like *Wild-fire*, do only crack and vanish into Air, but leave no *formidable* Effects behind them. To name no more, what *mighty* Hurt is there in being *persecuted* for *Righteousness* sake? Suppose I were banished from my Friends and *native* Country, do I not see Men every Day undertake a *voluntary* Exile, and banish themselves into the *remotest* Parts of the World, only to get an Estate, or to learn Experience, or satisfy a Curiosity? for all the difference between *one* and *t'other*, is only this, that the *one* is forced, and the *other* voluntary, and why the *one* should be worse than the *other*, there can be no *other* Reason assigned, but only this, that we imagin it so. Could we but cure our *erroneous* Fancy, such Banishment would be only a more *advantageous* Travel, since doubtless, he who travels to save his Conscience and Innocence, and secure his Hopes of *everlasting* Bliss, makes the best Voyage in the World. Suppose I should suffer a *close* Imprisonment, and be secluded from *human* Conversation; is it such a *deplorable* Thing for a Man to be kept within Doors, to be snatch'd out of the Crowd and *Hurry* of the World, and

be

be forced to retire within himself, and converse with *God*, and *Heaven*, and his own Thoughts? Are not *these* Company enough to entertain our Solitudes, and to supply the Want of the Noise of the World, in which there is commonly so much of Discord and Impertinence? But then suppose the worst that you *can* suppose; that you should suffer a *tormenting* Death, and be chased out of the World with the *severest* Instruments of *human* Cruelty. It is certain that e'er long you must have died whether you had suffer'd *Martyrdom* or no; only now you die a little sooner, and so anticipate your *eternal* Happiness. And if you had died a *natural* Death, perhaps the Torment might have been much greater; you might have languished much longer under the *Gout*, or *Stone*, or *Strangury*, than under the Hands of the Executioner, and endured the *same* Degree of Torment, without the Comfort of dying in a *brave* Cause, and being assured of an *immortal* Recompence. Thus *Religion* sets the *Evils* of this World in a true Light, and represents them to us in their own *natural* Forms and Colours, without any of that *terrible* Pomp in which our Imagination is so apt to dress and disguise them; it assures us that they are all design'd for our *good*, and are convertible into it, and if we take Care to make a *wise* and *pious* Use

of them, we shall be the better for them for ever; it certifies us that they can deprive us of no *Good*, but what e'er long will be insignificant to us; and that they can do us no *Hurt*, but what e'er long we shall be insensible of *for ever*; and by thus exposing these *Evils* naked to us, it shews us their Nakedness, and Impotence, and thereby deprives them of the Power they borrow of our *Fancies* to disturb our Tranquility and Peace.

4. Another Cause of Disquiet of Mind, is an *effeminate* Softness, and Delicacy of Temper, arising from our Neglect of exercising those *Virtues* which naturally tend to confirm and fortifie the Mind against *troublesome* and *disquieting* Accidents; such as *Faith*, *Patience*, and *Self-denial*, *Submission* and *Resignation* to God, which when like so many *Guardian Angels* they pitch their Tents about the Soul, are an *invincible* Defence to her against the Strokes and Impressions of Misfortune, and without which, she is left altogether *naked* and *unguarded* amidst all the *disquieting* Accidents that surround her. For in the Absence of these *heavenly* Graces, a Man hath nothing where-withal to resist any *Evil* that befalls him, but only the *insensible* Stupidity, and *brutal* Sturdiness of his Temper, which can never hold out long under any *pressing* Calamity; and

and when once these are broke by the *repeated* Strokes and Impressions of *unfortunate* Accidents, the Man presently dissolves into Softness and Effeminacy ; for now the *natural* Brawniness of Temper being worn away like a Stone with the continual Droppings of Rain, his Mind will become so *tender*, and *fore*, and *uneasie*, that every *little* Touch of Misfortune will pain and disturb him ; in which Case he can derive no Relief from his Reason, having all along disused himself to advise and consult with it ; and so every *Alarm* of Danger from *without*, presently raises a Tumult *within*, and puts his whole *Soul* into an uproar, in which his Mind is left naked of all Relief, and utterly abandoned of those *wise* and *brave* Thoughts which should guard and defend it. But now had he taken Care but to educate his Mind in the School of *Christianity*, that by instructing him in all those *manly* Virtues of *Patience* and *Temperance*, *Constancy* and *Resignation* to the Will of God, would have inspir'd him by Degrees with such an *invincible* Stayedness and Firmness of Spirit, as would have rendred his Peace and Tranquility impregnable against all the Assaults of Misfortune. And when all is done, these *Virtues* are the *best* Protection we have against the Power of those *calamitous* Accidents that surround us. For when by *Temperance* a
Man

Man hath weaned himself from the Pleasures of the Body, when by *Patience* he hath hardned himself against the Pains and Displeasures of it, when by *Constancy* to himself, he hath acquired a *continual* Presence of Mind, and ready Use of his Reason and Consideration, when by *frequent* Acts of *Resignation* to God he hath reduced himself to an Habit of embracing every Accident as a Token of Love, and bidding every Thing welcome that befalls him; when, I say, these *happy* Effects are produced in him, he is as safe and secure from the disquieting Power of these *evil* Accidents below, as if he lived in the *uppermost* Regions of the Air, where he enjoys a *perpetual* Calm and Serenity, where he tramples upon Clouds, and is above all Storms, and with *cheerful* and *composed* Mind can sit securely, smiling at the *rolling* Thunder *below*, whilst it grumbles and bursts underneath his Feet. Thus will the *constant* Practice of these *excellent* Graces, so *steel* and *harden* our *tender* Minds, that those *Evils* will be able to make no Impression on *us*, which now do wound us to the Heart. For as the Light of the Sun, and Freshness of the Air which are apt to offend the *Sickly* and *Tender*, are not only tolerable but delightful to Men of *hale* and *vigorous* Constitutions; so many of the *little* Hardships which trouble and incommode the

the *Tender* and *Delicate*, are so far from disturbing *patient* and *temperate* Minds, that they rather refresh and divert them.

5. And lastly, Another Cause of Disquiet of Mind, is our misplacing of our *Happiness* in Things that are out of *our own* Power. For Happiness is the *great* Load-stone that attracts and governs all our Motions, the Mark of all our Aims and Intentions, and the End of all our *deliberate* Actions. Whilst therefore we place our *Happiness* in Things that are out of our Power, we must be governed by Things that are out of our Power, and while we are so, we can never be quiet. For the Things that are out of our Power, being all of them *casual* and *contingent*, such as *Honour*, and *Greatness*, and *Carnal-Pleasures*; we can never be secure of the Comfort and Happiness we place in them, and consequently, our *Happiness* and *Misery* must be as *casual* and *contingent* as the *Goods* and *Evils* are from whence they do arise. And whilst we are governed by such *casual* Things as these, we can never be *our own* Men, but must live in Subjection to a *forraign* Power, and be what the Things that govern us will have us; and so long as the Passions and Appetites that over-rule us, are over-ruled by the Chances and Contingencies without us, we must be as *various*, as *fickle*, and as *multiform* as they. Whilst there-

therefore we place our Happiness in these *uncertain* Enjoyments, it is impossible our Mind should ever be at rest, but like a Ship in a *tempestuous* Sea, must be perpetually tossed and driven *to and fro* by the *furious* Gusts of our own Passions, which can never be *calm* and *sedate*, till we fix upon a Happiness that is *certain* and *Stable*: For as our *Desires* can never be satisfied till we are compleatly happy, so our *Fears* can never be composed till such time as we are secure of our Happiness. But so *empty* and *fickle* is all worldly *Good*, that we can never be either *happy* in it, or secure of it; for when we have what we did first desire, *that* only inflames our Thirst, and makes us gasp for more; and then the Tenure of all is so *insecure*, that the Accession of more doth only increase our Fear of losing what we have. So that our Mind must be perpetually grounded between these *Two restless* Millstones, the *Desire* of getting more, and the *Fear* of losing what we enjoy; and therefore seeing it is impossible for us to alter the Nature of these *outward* Goods, or to render them either more secure, or more satisfying, the only way for us to be truly *happy*, is to alter the Temper of our *own* Minds, to wean them from this World, and determin them to an Happiness that is more Solid and Substantial, and within *our own* Dispo-

Disposal; and such a Happiness is that which *Christianity* proposes to us, an Happiness that depends upon our own *free* Acts, and grows out of the *Graces* and *Vertues* of our own Mind. For so that *everlasting* Heaven which the *Gospel* proposes to us is inseparably annexed to the *right* and *good* Use of our *natural* Liberty, and consequently is as much within our Power, as *our own* Resolutions, and *voluntary* Motions. Whilst therefore we are under the Government of this *Christian* Happiness, we are Masters of *our own* Fortunes, and do live independently on Chance and the Wills of Men, and it is within *our own* Power to be happy without asking leave of any but *God* and ourselves. Now we are no longer *Tenants* at *Will* to the *little* Casualties and Accidents of the World, no longer liable to be turned out of our Happiness by *Storms*, or *Fires*, or *Invasions*, by the *Contingencies* of Providence, or the *Knaveries* and *Cruelties* of Men; no more exposed like *miserable* Vagrants to beg our Happiness from Door to Door, to creep, and cringe, and fawn to the Humors of an *Inconstant* World, to court its Smiles, or tremble at its Frowns. For if *Heaven* be the Happiness we depend on, there is nothing can deprives us of it, but our own *free* Acts, and it is as much in our Power not to be *miserable*, as not to be *wicked*

wicked; and our *Happiness* being all imbar-
 ed in the same bottom with our *Piety* and
Vertue, they must both of them run the
 same Fate, and either swim or sink together.
 If therefore we would be at *Peace* within our
 selves, we must put our selves under the
 Government of the Happiness of *Christians*,
 which is the only one that we can be sure
 of, there being no other within *our own* Pow-
 er and Disposal; for till this is done, we are
 like Men in a Crowd, encompassed about
 with so many *cross rencountring* Accidents as
 will never let us be at rest, but be perpe-
 tually shoving, and jostling us *to and fro*, and
 still as we get free from *one*, another will be
 pressing upon us, and that which thrusts on
this, will still be thrust on by *another* with-
 out any Pause or Intermiſſion; and so our
miserable Minds will be alwayes hurried a-
 bout, and never want Causes of Disquiet.
 But when once we have fix'd upon *that*
 Happiness above, we shall be so much above
 these *little* Accidents *below*, and their Force
 will be so broken, before they can reach us,
 that we shall scarce be sensible of their *faint*
 Impressions, and so we shall pass on as qui-
 etly and undisturbedly through them, as we
 do nough throw those Crowds of *Motes* that
 are always dancing in the Air about us.

And so I have dispatched the first Thing I
 propoſed, which was to shew that our *blessed*

Lord in order to his giving us *his Peace*, hath removed from us all Causes of Disquiet.

2. I now proceed to the Second, which is to shew, that he hath also taken Care to supply us with the most *effectual* Principles of *Peace*, and *Satisfaction* of Mind; and they are these following.

1. That by the Sacrifice of *himself*, he hath purged away our Guilts, and thereby given us the most *certain* Ground of Peace of Conscience.
2. That as he sacrificed himself for us, while he was upon *Earth*, so now he is in *Heaven*, he hath the Ordering and Disposal of every Thing that concerns or befalls us.
3. That he hath procured for us a Futurity, sufficiently happy to make us *infinite* amends for the *worst* Evils that can befall us here.
4. That he hath established this *happy* Futurity upon such Terms and Conditions, as are within the reach of *our own* Power.
5. That he hath taken Care in his Absence to provide for us *such* Supports as are *proportionable* to every Burthen he will lay upon us.
1. One Principle of *Peace* and *Satisfaction* of Mind wherewith our *Saviour* hath supplied us is this, that by the Sacrifice of himself,

self, he hath fully purged away our Guilts,
 and thereby given us the most *certain*
 Ground of Peace of Conscience: For he de-
 clared that he died in our Persons and stead,
 and that all those *miserable* Things he en-
 dured upon the Cross, were in lieu of that
 Punishment that was due to God for our
 sins; that the Blood he spilt *there*, was de-
 signed by him for the Price of our Re-
 demption, and that the Life he laid down
there, was in exchange for the *forfeited* Lives
 of our Souls. And to manifest God's Ac-
 ceptance of it, as an *Equivalent* for our
 Punishment, he rose from the dead, and
 was actually discharged from the Prison of
 the Grave; by which he gave us an Ac-
 quittance under God's own Hand, purport-
 ing, that he had graciously accepted his
 Son's Death in lieu of our Punishment, and
 that if now we would heartily repent and
 amend all our *past* Guilts and Obligations
 to Punishment should, in Consideration
 thereof, be for ever dissolved. *Who then*
can lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect,
seeing it is Christ that hath died, and there-
by tendered a full Ransom for us to God; yea,
rather, that is risen again, and thereby cer-
tified us, that the Father of Mercies hath
graciously accepted and allowed of it: So
that if now we repent, we are as certain of
our Pardon, as we are of the Death and Re-

surrection of our *Saviour*; which are such Facts, of which we have as plain Demonstration as the Nature of Things will bear. And having so *certain* a Ground of Peace of Conscience before us, what can be more *conducive* to the Ease and Satisfaction of our Minds? For a *quiet* Conscience is a Paradise within a Wilderness, whereinto a Man may retire when he can find nothing else to live upon, and live chearfully and merrily in despite of all Misfortunes, which, like Showers of Hail falling upon the Tiles of a *Musick-House*, are not able with all their Clattering and Noise, to disturb the *grateful* Harmony within. As therefore when all is *smooth* and *prosperous* without, a Man may shelter himself there from the Persecutions of his Conscience, so when all is *calm* and *serene* within, he may shelter himself there from the Persecutions of the World; but when *both* are bestricken, he hath no Refuge to fly to. And therefore that we may never be left utterly forsaken and abandoned, our *blessed Saviour* by washing away our Guilt in *his own* Blood, hath opened to us a *safe* Retreat within our own Breasts, *viz.* that of a *quiet* and *serene* Conscience, whereinto we may easily retire, and house our selves when we are persecuted with Storms and Tempest from without.

2. Another Principle of Peace and Satisfaction of Mind wherewith our *Saviour* hath furnished us, is this, that as he sacrificed himself for us when he was upon *Earth*, so now he is in *Heaven*, he hath the Ordering and Disposal of every Thing that concerns or befalls us. For now he is in *Heaven*, he intercedes for us in Virtue of that Sacrifice which he offered on *Earth*; and in the Virtue of *this* his *meritorious* Intercession, all Power is given him in *Heaven* and *Earth*. And indeed herein consists the *Royalty* of his *Priesthood*, *viz.* that by interceding for us as a *Priest*, and continuing so to do, he first obtained, and still continues vested with a *kingly* Power and Authority to bestow upon us all those *heavenly* Blessings he intercedes for. And hence all the Graces and Favours of *God* are in *Scripture* said to be derived to us *in*, or *by*, or *through* *Jesus Christ*; implying, that as it is from *God* the *Father* originally, that all our Mercies flow, so it is through *God* the *Son* immediately, that they are handed and derived to us; and that interceding for us as he doth, and always hath done, in Virtue of the *powerful* Oratory of his Sacrifice, he was first constituted, and is still continued the *royal* Distributer of all his Father's Graces and Favours to Mankind. So that now we are assured, there is nothing can happen to us

good or bad, but by his *merciful* Disposal, and can we think any thing *bad* that comes from his hand, who hath evidenced himself so much our Friend as to die for us? He who loved us to such a *stupendious* Degree, as to come down from *Heaven*, and assume our Natures, and therewith, all our *innocent* Infirmities and Miseries, and at last to suffer for us the most *grievous* and *infamous* Death; can he be *unkind* to us now he is our *King*, and hath the ordering and disposal of all our Affairs? Whenever therefore any *calamitous* Accident befalls us, and we begin to grieve or repine at it; let us remember that it is through his Permission or Appointment, who was so much our Friend while he was upon Earth, that he tendred our Welfare far beyond his own Life; and if this doth not set our Hearts at rest, and reconcile us to the *worst* of Things that can happen to us, we are beyond the Reach and Influence of Reason and Discourse. For how can we suspect any thing to be *hurtful* to us, that is sent us down from our *merciful* Redeemer in *Heaven*, who when he was upon *Earth* never thought any thing, no not his own Life and *Blood too* much, or *too* dear for us. How grievous soever therefore any *present* Accident may appear to us, the Hand it came from, speaks and declares it to be a Token of Love, since to be sure nothing but Love can

can proceed from *that* Hand whose Heart
 alway loved us far above its own Ease, and
 Joy, and Life.

3. Another Principle of Peace and Satisfac-
 tion of Mind wherewith our *Saviour* hath
 supplied us is this, that he hath procured
 for us a *Futurity* sufficient to make us *infi-*
nite Amends for the *worst* of *Evils* that can
 befall us here; for he hath not only pur-
 chased for us *Life* and *Immortality* at the
 Price of his Blood, but hath also clearly
 discovered and brought it to light by his
Gospel, the *joyous* Prospect of which is a-
 bundantly sufficient to support our Spirits
 under the most *direful* Accidents. For now
 when any *melancholy* Apprehensions begin to
 invade my Mind, this *blest* Theme fur-
 nishes me with such a *mighty* Force of *joy-*
ous Considerations as are abundantly suffi-
 cient to dispel and scatter them, and cause
 them to fly away like the Morning Mists
 before the *rising* Sun. Hold out, O my
Faith and *Patience*, it is but a very *little*
 while that I have to suffer: This *woful*
 Dream that now lies hovering over my Ima-
 gination will vanish as soon as I awake in
Eternity, and be as if it had never been at
 all. There all these *sad* Remembrances
 shall in one Moment be for ever lost, and
 swallowed up in one *continued everlasting*
 Joy; there I shall unload my self at once

of all my *present* Sighs and Griefs, and in their room take up *eternal* Songs of Praise and Hallelujahs ; there I shall be placed far above all these Clouds and Storms in a *calm* and *quiet* Region, where there is nothing but *Light* and *Harmony*, nothing but *Peace*, and *Joy*, and *Love* ; from thence I shall e'er long look down upon this *dark unquiet Atmosphere*, and remember with Joy all the *foul tempestuous* Weather I here endured, and have now surmounted, and the *glad* Remembrance of what is past will then serve only as a Foil or Shadow to set off that *blessed* State of Things, and render it more charming and illustrious. Why then art thou cast down, O my Soul, under the Sense of these *short-liv'd transitory* Evils of which within these very *few* Moments thou shalt be sure to take leave for ever ? Tho' this Night be *dark* it is but *short*, and then will follow an *everlasting* Day. Tho' thy Voyage be *foul*, it is not *long* ; 'tis only a *short days* Sail to a *blessed* Eternity, from whose *happy* Shores thou wilt a little while hence be looking back upon this *boisterous* Sea, and blessing those *angry* Storms and Waves that drove and hastned thee to that *happy* Port ; where every Moments Injoyment will be sufficient to recompense thee a *thousand-fold* for all the Hardships under which thou art now suffering and complain-
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ing. Such Thoughts as these that *blessed* Futurity our *Saviour* hath purchased for us do naturally suggest to our Minds, which mingling with the *utmost* Grievs and Anxieties that any *Evil* from *without* can raise *within* us are abundantly sufficient to compose and calm them, and to create a *happy* Serenity in our own Breast, while all without us is *stormy* and *tempestuous*. For what *outward* Evil is there weighty enough to sink a Mind, that hath the hope of an *everlasting* Heaven to support it?

4. Another Principle of Peace and Satisfaction of Mind wherewith our *Saviour* hath supplied us is this, that he hath established this *happy* Futurity upon such Terms and Conditions as are within the Reach of *our own* Power; that is, upon *Faith in Christ*, and *Repentance from dead Works*; which tho' in this *degenerate* State of our Nature it be not immediately in our Power to perform, yet mediately it is by those Helps and Assistances which God hath promised to us, and inseparably annexed to our making a *good* Use of our own *natural* Power. For since God by his own *free* Promise hath entailed the Assistances of his *Grace* upon our *honest* Endeavour, his *Grace* is as much at our devotion as our own Faculties, and it is as much in our Power to perform what we cannot without his *Grace*, as it is to perform what

what we can; and therefore seeing by his Assistance we can perform the Conditions of *eternal* Life, it is in our Power to perform them, because it is no less within our Power to oblige him to assist us than it is to oblige our selves to exert *our own* Power and Endeavours; the Conditions of our Happiness being through the Grace of *God* within our own Power, our Happiness is so too; which if duly considered is a *mighty* Support under all Afflictions from without. For why should we grieve that it is in the Power of Men and a thousand *adverse* Accidents to rob us of our *Ease* and our *Wealth*, our *Liberty* and *Reputation*? *God* be praised our *main* Happiness consists not in these Things, but in *Heaven*; there lies the Treasure of our Hearts, and the Hope of our Lives, of which there is none but our selves can disappoint us. If we will be happy in the *eternal* Possession of that *inexhaustable* Mine of *Bliss*, we may, and all the Hardships and Inconveniencies we may endure on the Way to it are neither able to obstruct our Passage, nor hinder our *safe* Arrival; unless by a *base* Surrender to them we betray our selves. So that now we may give a *bold* Defiance to all the *combining* Malice of Men and Devils, and tell them that we will be *happy*, eternally *happy* in despite of the worst they can do to us, see-
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ing the matter wholly depends upon *our* own Courage and Resolution backt and assisted by the *never-failing* Grace of God. There is nothing that Men or Misfortune can deprive me of but I can live without, and maintain my self in a *happy* and *glorious* Post for ever. Why then should I grieve to see my Drugs flung over-board, which within a few Moments hence will be of no Use or Value to me, so long as it is in my Power to save all my *precious* and *immortal* Freight; and thereby to secure my self of a most *happy* and *prosperous* Voyage; Whenever therefore we are threatned with *sad* Contingencies, or with the Power or Malice of Men, we have *this* Answer ready to return to them; God be praised, our *main* Happiness depends not upon you; we can, if we will, go to *Heaven* in despite of you, and when once we are *there* we shall be far beyond your Reach, and then these *light* Afflictions which you now lay upon us, and *which are but for a moment*, will be found unworthy to be compared with that *eternal Glory* which shall be revealed to us. Which Consideration closely applied, and deeply imprinted on our Minds, is of *sufficient* Vertue to ease and relieve us under the most *calamitous* Circumstances; for while our *main* Chance and Interest is safe, all is well with us, and then we are

are secure none can prejudice us but our selves.

5. And lastly, another Principle of Peace and Satisfaction of Mind wherewith our *Saviour* hath supplied us is this, that he hath taken Care, during his Absence from us, to provide for us *such* Supports as are proportionable to every Burthen he will lay upon us. For so he tells his *Disciples*, when he was departing from them, that it was *expedient* for them that he should *go away*, because until he went, according to the *divine* Oeconomy, the *Comforter* was not to come; *but when I depart*, saith he, *I will send him unto you*, Jo. 16. 7. And accordingly when he departed he sent down his *holy Spirit* to represent himself and act as his *Vicegerent* in his *heavenly* Kingdom, and to do all that for us which he himself would have done had he continued personally present with us. So that tho' now he is a great way off from us in Person, yet by his *Spirit* he is still *present* with us; *present* with all that *tender* Affection, and with all those *yearning* Bowels of Compassion that he express'd towards us while he was upon Earth. And whereas had he continued among us in Person he could have been *present* with us only at such *determinate* Places and Distances, he is now present with us where-ever we are, in every Place, and at every

every Distance by his *immense* Spirit, which like an *Omnipresent Soul* being diffused through all his *Mystical Body* gives Life and Motion to every Part and Particle of it. And having thus taken Care to supply his *personal* Absence from us with this *divine Presence*, which is every way co-extended to the *utmost* Diffusion of his *Church*, we may depend upon it that where-ever or in what Circumstances soever we are, he is by us, and with us, beholding all our Needs with a *compassionate* Heart, and ready to extend to us whatever Aids and Supports we stand in need of. How then can we droop in his *blessed* Presence? How can our Hearts sink while he stands by us? What *Evil* is there can scare or distract our Minds, whilst we consider that the *Almighty Spirit* of the *blessed Jesus* our Friend is always and every where with us, ready bent to stretch forth his *helping* Hand to support us under every Oppression? Alas! I am afraid *this* Burthen will at length grow *too* heavy for me, that my Strength and Courage will at last be forced to yield, and sink underneath it. Well, tho' you fear *your own* Strength, yet sure you cannot doubt the Strength and Power of the *Spirit* of God, and his Strength is yours to all *necessary* Purposes as much as it is his own; and therefore unless you apprehend your Burthen to be *too* heavy for *his* Power

Power as well as yours, you have no Reason to dread that you shall sink underneath the Weight of it. You are afraid lest you should be called forth to suffer for *Righteousness sake*, and lest under the Rage and Violence of Persecution your *Faith* and *Constancy* should shrink and yield. Why consider with your selves, are there not Thousands of *Christians* that have suffered before you, suffered as *terrible* Things as you can possibly dread, and this not only with *Patience* and *Constancy*, but with *Joy* and *Triumph*? Why then should you suspect that *blest* Spirit which supported them, to be less able or willing to bear up you? He who hath so often enabled so many *tender* Virgins, *delicate* Matrons, *infirm* and *aged* Bishops to sing in the midst of flames, to smile upon *Racks*, to triumph upon *Wheels* and *Catasta's*; and in short, to endure such *long* and *dolorous* Martyrdoms, as many times they did, when their Tormentors took their Turns from Morning to Night, and plyed them with all Kinds of Cruelties till many times they were forced to give over, and confess that they had not Heart enough to inflict the Tortures which those *poor* Sufferers had Courage enough to endure: He, I say, who hath thus far enabled *them*, can he not as well enable *you*? Is his Arm shortened that he cannot save, or his Ear grown heavy

heavy that he cannot hear you as well as them? Consider then, you have the same Right that they had by the same *never-failing* Promise to this his enabling Power, which by so many *glorious* Instances hath demonstrated it self sufficient to support you under the *heaviest* Oppressions; and therefore you have all the reason in the world to expect the same Aids and Supports from it if ever you should be reduced to the same Extremities. Our great Care therefore ought to be that we do not desert our *Saviour*, either by *wilful* Apostacy from his Faith, or Disobedience to his Laws; for so long as we continue faithful to him he cannot leave and desert us; our main Concern ought to be that we do *our* Part, and not that he doth *his*; for he cannot fail, tho' we may. If we prove *true* to him we may assuredly depend upon it that he will prove *true* to us, and not leave us destitute of any Help or Support that in any Condition is *necessary* for us. If therefore to serve the wise and *holy* Ends of his Providence he should at any time think it meet to call us to suffer, we may set our Hearts at rest upon *this* Assurance, that so long as we take Care to maintain our Integrity he must take Care to maintain our Strength, and not permit us to sink under any Burthen he lays upon us for want of any degree of Comfort and Support

Support that our State and Condition requires. Which Consideration duly applied cannot fail of giving a great deal of Ease to our *anxious* and *desponding* Minds.

Having thus shewn at large what *abundant* Provision our *Saviour* hath made for the Peace and Satisfaction of our Minds, I shall conclude all in a very few Words. Our *blessed Saviour* hath long since told us that in *this* World we shall have Trouble, but that in him we shall have *Peace*; which, tho' it were more eminently true in those *early* Days of Suffering and Persecution, doth yet hold most certainly true not only in Times of Peace, but even in the most *prosperous* Circumstances of *humane* Life. For we cannot but know that we are dependent upon Chance; we cannot but know that it is in the Power of *ten thousand* Contingencies to disturb us, and this in despite of us will create a *great* many *anxious* Thoughts, and vex us with *melancholy* Apprehensions of our Futurity: And tho' at present we may hush them with Jolity and Mirth, upon the *next* Reflection they will be sure to awake again, and to revenge themselves upon us for those Moments of Ease we ravished from them; and then when any *evil* Accident threatens or approaches us we can give our selves no *certain* Assurance of escaping it. For when we have done all
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that lies within the Compass of our *Wisdom* and *Power*, there may a *thousand* Crosses arise in our way which it is impossible for us either to foresee or prevent, and turn our most *promising* Designs upon our selves, and hasten the *Evil* upon us by those very Means which we chuse to prevent it; the Sense of which must necessarily cause many a *stinging* Thought to swarm about our Minds, and to vex and disturb us in our *deepest* Security. Thus in our *best* Estate we are *poor* and *indigent* Creatures, fain to seek abroad, and to go a begging for our *Happiness* from Door to Door; to depend upon Chance, and live insecure of every thing we either possess, or desire, or hope for. And considering how prone we are to be alarmed with the Prospect of a *sad* Futurity, and to magnify *distant* Evils in our own Apprehensions, and to aggravate *present* ones by our Impatience and Despair; and in a word, to pall our *best* Enjoyments by expecting more from them than their Nature will afford; considering these Things, I say, it is the *greatest* Nonsense in the World for Men to expect Peace and Satisfaction of Mind from any thing here below. And if we are thus liable to Disturbance in our *best* Estate, alas, what are we in our *worst*! When Calamities come rolling upon us like the Waves of the Sea upon the back of one *another*, and

we have no Harbour in View to put in at. In this *vast* Tumult of things therefore whether shall we betake our selves for Tranquility and Peace? If we go into the World, every thing in it tells us it is not in me. If we go out of the World into *Desarts* and *Solitudes*, the Stings we shall either find there or carry thither with us will soon convince us that it is not in *them*. Where then can we hope to find Peace, but only in *Jesus the Prince of Peace*? To him therefore let us go with an *humble* Faith and *obedient* Will, with a resolved Mind to adhere to his Truth, and submit to his Laws, and wholly to resign our selves to his Conduct and Government. And if in him you do not find all that *Peace* and *Satisfaction* you have hitherto sought in vain, never give Credit to any thing that is *sacred* more. I am sure it is to be found in *him*, if we wisely, and honestly, and industriously seek it: Thousands have found it in *him*, who could find it nowhere else; and having found it have enjoyed themselves all their Days after in *sweet* Content and Peace, and at length have breathed out their Souls to him in Praises for the *happy* Discovery. And therefore if it be not our own fault we may soon add our selves to this *blessed* Number, by devoting our selves to him as they did, and surrendering our Lives and Interests to his Government

vernment and Disposal. And when once we have performed *this* with a *sincere* and *resolute* Intention, we shall by degrees perceive these Tempests within us quieted and abated, and our *stormy* Minds clearing up into an *happy* Serenity; and still as we more and more subdue our Wills and Affections to him we shall feel and experience our selves more and more at Ease, until at length we shall arrive to such a *settled* Peace and Tranquility of Soul as that it will be beyond the Power of any *outward* Concern to disturb us. And now our Mind will be a Paradise to it self, a Paradise wherein it will be able to live *contented* and *happy*, and to breath *calm* and *gentle* Thoughts how *tempestuous* soever its Condition is without. And finding all *composed* and quiet within, we shall lead a Life far more *easy*, and *even*, and *consistent* than ever; for now we shall no longer reserve our selves to follow Fortune and the Turns of *outward* Affairs, to comply with all the Mutabilities of the Wind, and still to transform our selves into *new* Shapes as we are running through the *still-changing* Fashions of the World. Now we shall no longer perplex and intangle our selves by *Knavish* Tricks and *sordid* Compliances, by being forced still to study how to act a *new* Part, and to put on a *new* Garb of Humour and Conversation upon every

new Alteration of Affairs; but our Way will lie *even, easy, and direct* before us, and whatsoever happens to us from *without*, whether it *rains* or *shines*, proves *calm* or *tempestuous*, the *inward* Peace and Satisfaction we shall find in following *Jesus* by our *firm* Adherence to his Truth, and Obedience to his Laws, will carry us safely thro' all Events, and render us far more *happy* even in our *persecuted* sincerity than we can reasonably suppose to be in the most *prosperous* Hypocrisie. Wherefore if ever you intend to beat Rest within, and to enjoy yourselves in Peace and Tranquility; go to *Jesus the Prince and Author of Peace*; Take with you Words and say, O blessed *Jesus*, *hitherto* we confess other Lords have had Dominion over us, such as *Pride and Ambition, Lust and Avarice*; and these have all proved unmerciful Tyrants to us, they have continually harassed and oppressed our Minds; they have laid waste all our Peace, stripp'd and plundered us of our Self-enjoyment, and almost worn out our Lives in perpetual Troubles and Anxieties. Wherefore now at last we return unto thee weary and heavy laden, not only with Guilt but Vexations, resolving for the future that thee alone we will serve. O do not reject us thy oppressed and miserable Creatures, who are driven unto thee for Refuge from those cruel Task-masters that have hitherto reigned over us;
but

but permit us to spend the Remainder of our Days under thy happy Government. We know thy yoke is easy, and thy Burthen light; and therefore suffer us now at last, we beseech thee, to come unto thee that in thee we may find rest for our Souls, who have sought it in vain in every Thing but thee. And having thus surrendered up our selves to him, let us by our constant Perseverance in Well-doing endeavour to subdue our selves more and more to his Will in this full Assurance that from our hearty and punctual Conformity thereunto, we shall reap not only Peace and Tranquility here, but also immortal Glory and Happiness hereafter: Which we beseech thee to grant us all of thy infinite Mercy, O blessed Jesu; to whom with thy great Father and eternal Spirit be ascribed of us and all the World all Honour and Glory and Praise from this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

JAMES I. 8.

A double-minded Man is unstable in all his Ways.

BY a *double-minded Man* here we are to understand (as is plain from the Context) an *insincere* Man, one who pretends to *Religion*, and hath a *good* Inclination towards it, but is not arrived to a *firm* and *prevailing* Resolution of adhering to it, *maugre* all Temptations to the contrary; that bears some *faint* and *ineffectual* Regard to the Rules of his Duty, and the Dictates of his Conscience, but not such as hath the Superiority over him, and doth command and govern his Life and Conversation; not such as hath that *prevailing* Influence upon him, as to hinder him from being ordinarily counter-swayed by his Appetites, or Passions, or secular Interests to the Commission of *unlawful* and *irregular* Actions. So that the *single-minded Man* is one who hath no other Mind, no other *prevailing* Purpose and Resolution, but to adhere to *God* in the Profession and Practice of true Religion, and upon every Emergency, is ready fix'd to perform what *God* demands of him by the Voice of Revelation and *right* Reason, and in a Word, that
lives

lives under no other commanding Principle but this, *I will always do what God will have me*: and so on the contrary, the *double-minded Man* is one that fluctuates between *Two Minds and Wills*, a Will for *God*, and a Will for the *World*; and is governed sometimes by *one*, and sometimes by *another*, but is never true or constant to either. In short, he is one who being yet unsubdued to the *commanding Power and Influence of Religion*, hath no fix'd, no determined Mind or Resolution; but is not only of *several Minds* upon *several Occasions*, but also of *contrary Minds* upon *contrary Occasions*. For his Heart is so divided between his *God* and his *Interest*, his *Duty* and his *Lust*, that like a Needle between *Two Load-stones* he is always wavering *too and again*, and pointing alternately to both, but is never fix'd to either. And of this Man the Apostle tells us, *That he is unstable in all his Ways*. Where by *Ways* according to the *Hebrew Phraseology*, he means *Actions*; he is unstable in all his *Actions*, that is, he always acts with an *anxious, doubtful, and misgiving Mind*; he knows not where to find himself, nor many times which way to turn himself; he leads a very *uncertain, insecure, and unquiet Life*, being all along perplexed and intangled in the whole Course of his

Actions. The Words thus explained may be resolved into this Proposition;

That whilst Mens Minds are divided between *God* and their Lusts, and are not intirely subdued to *his* Will; they must necessarily lead very *anxious, insecure, unstable* Lives: That till such time as we Act from an *intire* Submission of our Souls to *God*, we can never act steadily and securely, but must be always fluctuating in great Anxiety and Uncertainty.

The *Wise Man* tells us, that, *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*, Prov. 10. 9. He goes on in a *direct, secure, and even* Course of Action, wherein there is no Perplexity, or intanglement, whereas the Life of a *double-minded* Hypocrite whose Heart is divided between *God* and the World, is a *perpetual* Maze and Labyrinth, wherein the farther he goes, the more he is lost and confounded. And this will evidently appear upon the following Considerations.

1. That he acts upon no *fixed* or *certain* Principles.
2. That the Way and Course of his Actions is all *obscure* and *intricate*.
3. That he is always fain to live in a *Disguise*, and is therein insecure of Continuance.

4. That

4. That he is always at odds with himself, and in *perpetual* Variance with *his own* Reason.
5. That he is at a *miserable* Uncertainty as to the *present* Events and Issues of *his own* Actions.
6. That he hath a most *dismal* Prospect before him of the *final* Issue, and Event of all.

1. The *double-minded* Man acts upon no *fixed* or *certain* Principles. For the Principles he proceeds upon are such as have no Foundation in the Nature of Things, but, like Castles in the Air, are built upon *meer* Dreams and Delusions, which whenever his Reason awakes, will sink and disappear. For either he lives upon no Principles at all, but acts like the Beasts that Perish, upon *blind* Instincts, and the *unaccountable* Impulses of his *brutal* Sense; or upon such Principles as these, that there is no such *Being* in the World as an *eternal, and invisible, almighty Power*; or that if there be, he lives retired from us, and takes no Notice of what we do; or that if he doth, 'tis as an *unconcern'd* Spectator to whom it is purely indifferent whether we do *Good* or *Evil*; or that if he be at all pleased with our *good* Deeds, and displeased with our *bad*, yet it is not to any such Degree, as to intail any *future* Rewards up-

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on the *one*, or Punishments on the *other* ; or that if there be any such Rewards and Punishments prepared by him, they are so *slight and inconsiderable*, that the Loss of the *one*, and Sufferance of the *other*, are abundantly compensated by the *present* Pleasure of a sinful Life ; or in fine, that if neither the *one* nor the *other* prove true, yet we may securely enjoy these Pleasures while we are able, and by repenting at last when we are old or dying, and are able to enjoy them no longer, may intitle our selves to *those* Rewards, whatsoever they are, and secure our selves from *those* Punishments. This is the Chain of Principles, upon which *bad* Men live and act, if they act upon any at all, and which are all of them grounded upon such *doubtful* Presumptions, such *thin* Pretences, and *unsatisfactory* Reasonings, as no Man in his Wits can ever be thoroughly secure of. For besides that they contradict the *best* and *wisest* Part of the World, the *current* Sense of *humane* Nature, and the *common* Consent of all Mankind, which are such Prejudices against them, as must necessarily render them very doubtful at least ; besides all this, I say, they have so *strong* a Current of Evidence against them, and are over-powered with such a Force of Arguments from all the Quarters of *Reason* and *Reli-*

Religion, and the contrary Principles are so much more agreeable to all the Appearances of Things, to the *sacred Oracles*, to *human Society*, and to the very Frame of *human Nature*; and in a Word, have every way so *vast* an Over-weight of Reason on their side, that it is impossible for any Man in a *cold Mind* to be confident that they are true, how much soever it may be his Interest to wish them so. So that whereas the *sincere* and *upright* Man living, as he doth, upon *well-tried* Principles that for their Truth have been always found most *agreeable* to Reason, and for their Usefulness always approved by *constant* Experience, treads firmly and boldly, being secure of the Ground he goes upon; the *double-minded* Hypocrite, being all along uncertain of the Grounds of his Action, walks like a *benighted* Traveller in a *dangerous* Road, where he is fain to feel out his way, and to tread tenderly, and cautiously, lest his next step should be into a Bogg or a Precipice. And so long as he is *insecure* of the Principles upon which he acts, he can never be secure that he acts safely. He knows that if the Principles he goes upon prove *false*, he is undone, and whether they will prove so or no, he is at best uncertain; and so through the whole Course of his Sin and Life, he walks with

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an *anxious* and *misgiving* Mind, and goes trembling on between Hope and Fear to the *final* Issue and Event, which for all he knows may prove such as will put an end to all his Hopes for ever. For *maugre* all his Confidence, he cannot be sure but that when he dies, he may find all the Principles he acts on, baffled by a *woful* Experience; he may then feel that there is a God to whom Vengeance belongs, and an *eternal* Life of Rewards and Punishments; and if he should, how will it blank and amaze him, to find himself, instead of being reduced to an *insensible* Substance, landed on a *strange inhospitable* Shore, inhabited with *ghastly* Furies, and *miserable* Ghosts, and shut up with them by a *vast surrounding* Gulph in *everlasting* Horror and Despair: and therefore seeing he can have no Security, but that such may be the *fatal* Close of his sinful Life, he must, when ever he *cooly* reflects, be miserably *anxious*, and *uneasie*, and expect the mighty Event with Dread, and *dire* Abodings.

2. The Way and Course of a *double-minded* Man's Actions is all *obscure* and *intricate*. For whereas the Course of an *honest, upright* Man, is for the main of it chalked out to his hands both by *divine* Revelation, and the *natural* and *eternal* Reasons of Things,
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and that so plainly, and clearly, that as soon as he opens his Eyes, he may easily discern it without any great Reach of Wit, or Depth of Judgment; the Rule of his Actions being *open* and *direct*, without any *dark* Subtilties, or *intricate* Windings and Turnings; the *false pretending* Hypocrite lives in a Maze, wherein having no *certain* Rule to go by, he is very often at a loss which way to direct himself. For having forsaken the plain Paths which God hath described to him, he is put upon inventing a Way for himself, of studying *his own* Steps, and groping to his End through a *Labyrinth* of *popular* Errors and Mistakes; in which he is oftentimes *so* lost and bewildered, that he knows neither where he is, nor whither to go next; and sometimes the Way that he takes lies quite *cross* to his Ends, and sometimes leads him about in such a *wide* Compass, that by that time he arrives at them, they are not worth his Travel; and even when he thinks himself *most* in the right, and goes on with the *fullest* Assurance, Time and Chance many times cast up so many difficulties and *perplexing* Intercurrences in his Way, as to puzzle all his Wit and Contrivance how to break through them. Thus when men leave God's Way which is a *plain*, a *sure*, and *infallible* one, and commit themselves

selves to the Conduct of their own *blind* Wills and *short-sighted* Reason ; they forsake the Light of the Sun to follow a *Night-fire*, which instead of conducting them in the *plain* and *direct* Way, carries them at random about in the Dark, leads them *hither* and *thither*, *backwards* and *forwards*, over Hedges and Ditches, through Breaks and Bogs, till they are lost and maz'd in *their own* Wandrings. While they walk in God's Way, they have God's *Wisdom* for their Guide, which cannot mislead them ; there they have nothing to do, but to follow the *easy* Directions of an *infallible* Mind, to receive his Commands, and to obey them ; there they are free from all the Trouble of forming *new* Resolutions, and inventing *new* Measures of Action upon new Emergencies ; there they see their way plainly described to them, and are resolved once for all to pursue it through all Events, without any further Pause or Deliberation, being fully satisfied in themselves, that it is much *safer* for them to follow God's Will, which acts from *infinite* Goodness, by *infinite* Wisdom, with *infinite* Power, than to follow *their own* which they know by *woful* Experience is so liable to be imposed upon by false Shews and Appearances ; and to mistake *Poyson* for *Physick*, and *Evil* for *Good*. Thus
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while they are in God's Way, they find all things *direct*, and *plain*, and *easy* to them, but when they divert into *their own*, there they have nothing to guide them but a *vain foolish* Mind that is easily trick'd and imposed upon, and a blind *Appetite* that is conducted by a *roaring* Imagination; there they are fain to live by their Wits, upon *extemporary* Shifts and Evasions, and still to invent *new* Ways upon *new* Occasions, and to wander about in in a *mysterious* Labyrinth of *little* Tricks and Contrivances, which instead of extricating them out of the Difficulties of Life, do commonly but more and more perplex and intangle them. And hence, as *the Path of the Just* is in Scripture described to be *as the shining Light*, Prov. 4. 18. to have *nothing froward or perverse in them*, and to be *plain to him that understandeth*, Prov. 8. 8, 9. and to be an *even Place*, where *none of his Steps shall slide*, Psal. 26. 12. compar'd with 37. 31. So on the other side *the Paths of the Wicked* are said to be *dark and crooked*, Prov. 2. 13, 15. and to be *uneven and slippery*, Jer. 23. 12. And in such a way as *this*, how is it possible for a Man to walk firmly and stably?

3. The *double-minded* Man is always fain to live in a Disguise, and is therein very *secretive*, of Concealment; and this also renders

ders him *unstable in all his Ways* : 'Tho' considering what a *false* and *ill-natur'd* World we live in, it is many times an *honest* and *necessary* Prudence for a Man to reserve his Mind, and not proclaim even his *fairest* Intentions in every ones Ear with whom he converses. But for a Man to live in a *continual* Disguise, and always look *one* Way, and row *another*, to counterfeit and dissemble, and mask his *real* Intentions with *contrary* Appearances, is a very *uneasie* Way of living; for there is *twice* the Difficulty in every Thing that he aims and drives at, as there is in an *honest* and *above-board* Procedure. Here *honest* Ends are pursued by *direct* Means, without need of any Colour or Artifice; whereas, *there* commonly more Art is required to justify the Means, than to manage them; and to dissemble the Ends, than to obtain them. For whilst the Ends a Man proposes be *foul* and *dishonest*, he must in his own Defence pretend quite contrary to *his own* Intentions; and to form and manage his Pretensions so artificially, as to conceal his *bad* Intentions under them, till they are executed, is commonly the *greatest* Difficulty in the Execution of them. For tho' Men may be *foolish* enough, yet they are not *good-natur'd* enough to be always imposed upon by *fair* Pretences; their very
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ill Nature makes them jealous and suspicious, and their Jealousie and Suspicion makes them prying and inquisitive. And what a deal of Art must it require for a Man to conceal himself, and carry on his *ill* Aims with any *plausible* Colour, when he hath so many *jealous* and *inquisitive* Eyes upon him? And then for a Man to dissemble, is an outrage to himself, 'tis to act against the Grain of *his own* Nature by making an *outward* Shew and Appearance of that which he *inwardly* hates. For while a Man pretends to be *that* which he is not, he must seem in his Actions to be *that which* he is most averse to, and all the while he doth so, he thwarts himself, and acts directly contrary to his own Inclinations. If his *wicked* Aims did not force him to hide himself, while he is making a *formal* Shew of Mortification, he would much rather be satiating his *hungry* Lusts; while he is hanging down his Head like a Bul-rush to disguise his *Pride* and *Ambition*, he would much rather be *strutting*, *insulting*, and *domineering*; while he is giving his *Alms to be seen of Men*, he would much rather be *grinding* and *oppressing* the Poor; and whilst in order to his devouring *Widows houses* he is making *long Prayers*, he would much rather be glutting his Avarice with the Spoil. So that all

the while he pretends to be the *contrary* to what he is, he must practise the *contrary* to what he is inclined, and while he doth so, he offers a *perpetual* Force and Violence to himself. Now what *uneasie* Way of living must this be, for a Man to be always studying how to conceal himself, and to be forced to live in a Disguise that he hates? and yet this is the Life of the *double-minded* Man that trains between God and the World. And then that which adds to his Uneasiness is, that after all he can never be secure of his Disguise; he knows that if he should be discovered through it, it would quite spoil his Game, and instead of setting a Gloss upon his *foul* Intentions, it would only render them more *ugly* and *odious*; there being nothing can render Wickedness more ugly than it is, but the Discovery and Appearance of it through the Vail of Sanctity. So that if ever his *wicked* Intentions should happen to be discovered, they will be sure to fare the worse for their being disguised, and 'tis a Thousand to One, but *first* or *last* some Accident or *other* detects and unmasks them, and then they are for ever baffled and disappointed. So that this *double-minded* Hypocrite walks like a Malefactor in a Vizard, afraid of every one that looks wisely upon him, jealous of being betray'd even by his
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own Voice, or Shape, or Deportment, full of *anxious* Thoughts, lest by some Accident or *other* his Vizard should drop off and discover him; being conscious to him self, that if ever the *Mystery* of his Iniquity should be unfolded, and what he hath acted *behind* the Curtain should be brought to Light, he shall not only lose all the Credit and Advantage of the *Part* he hath hitherto so *artificially* acted, but also be hiss'd off the Stage with Scorn and Infamy. And how then is it possible for a Man to walk steadily under such *slippery* Circumstances, when he dances upon a Rope as it were, where if he trips he falls, and if he falls he is ruined.

4. He is always at odds with himself, and in *perpetual* Variance with *his own* Reason. There is a Sense in Mens Souls that doth as naturally distinguish between *Good* and *Evil*, as their Taste doth between *bitter* and *sweet*, and is equally pleased or offended by them. Whilst therefore *this* Sense remains alive within us, and in any Degree *quick* and *perceptive*, every Touch and Impression of *evil* will *more* or *less* pain and aggrieve it, and till with the *customary* Impressions of *evil* a Man hath lea'd and nupia'd his Sense of it, he will never be able to sin in quiet for it, but upon every *cold* Reflection on *his own* ill Courses, will feel a *sharp*

Remorse and Compunction. And this is inevitable to the *double-minded* Man, who divides himself between *God* and his Lusts; for he retains so much of *God*, as will always keep his Sense of *Good* and *Evil* alive, and together with *it*, he retains so much of his Lusts, as will always disturb and offend it: so that at once he takes *effectual* Care both to preserve his Sense of *Evil* quick and vigorous, and to be perpetually vexing it with the *painful* Impressions of *Evil*, and so treats himself, as heretofore the Tormentors did the *suffering* Martyrs, who gave them Cordials to keep them alive, only to enable them to sustain more Torments. If he would wholly abandon *God* he might thereby extinguish his Sense of *Evil*, or if he would wholly abandon his Lusts, he might thereby prevent his sensation of *Evil*; but while he retains *both*, he retains both Sense for his Torment, and Torment for his Sense, and at once cherishes the *Evil* that afflicts his Sense, and preserves his Sense alive to endure the Affliction. There are no Two Things in the World can less endure one another in the *same* Breast than a *sensible* Conscience and a *wicked* Will, which like *Fire* and *Water* will be continually struggling till either the *one* is quenched, or the *other* evaporated. The Will will not let the Conscience

science be quiet, nor the Conscience the Will; and so those *Two Commanding Powers* of our Souls will live in *perpetual Variance*, and admit of no *other Intercourse* but *mutual Violences* and Outrages, till either the *one* is extinguished, or the *other* subdued. Whilst therefore a Man's Mind is *double* and *divided*, his Soul is in a State of War, there being *Two irreconcilable Parties* perpetually struggling within his Breast; a Law in his *Mind* fighting against the Law in his *Members*, his *Reason* against his *Appetite*, his Conscience against his Will; so that he can take neither Part without doing Violence to himself. If he sides with his Conscience, he *outrages* his Will, if he sides with his Will he *forces* his Conscience; If he take part with his Appetite, he makes War with his Reason; if he complies with his Reason, he bids defiance to his Appetite. Thus which way soever he determines himself, he is sure to determine against *one* Part of himself; and it can never be otherwise till *one* of these *adverse* Parts of himself are subdued, and his *double* Mind is reduced to a *single* one. When he hath but *one* Mind, whether it be a *good* or a *bad* one, he will be at Peace and Unity with himself; but before he can have one *good* Mind, he must form a *good* Resolution, and follow it till he hath intirely

subdued his Will and Appetite to his Reason and Conscience, and then the *intestine* War will conclude in a *happy* Peace ; and so on the contrary, before he can have one *bad* Mind, he must abandon himself to all *Ungodliness* and *worldly Lusts*, and continually drink *in* Iniquity as the Horse drinks *in* Water, till he hath intoxicated his Reason with it, and stupified his Conscience ; and then the *intestine* Struggle will conclude in a *lethargick* Quiet and Insensibility ; But to arrive at *this*, is far more difficult than it is to acquire the *former* ; for while a Man contends with his Reason and Conscience, he contends with his *original* Nature, and to vanquish *that*, is far more difficult than to subdue his *wicked* Will, and *inordinate* Appetite, which are but his *acquired* Nature, and consequently doth not so inseparably adhere to him, nor is so inveterate. But till his Conscience and his Reason are intirely vanquished, they will be struggling and contending ; and whilst they do so, he will be continually at *Odds* and *Variance* with himself. He must Act all along with a *Self-condemning* Mind, and be content to endure the Reproaches of his Reason, and the Clamours of his Conscience ; and while he doth so, he can never Act steadily and securely. For whilst his Reason, which is to be his Guide

Guide, is dissatisfied with his Way, it is impossible for him to walk on without *Diffidence* and *Anxiety*; at every Step he must tread with Distrust, and proceed with a *trembling* Heart, lest the Ground should sink under him; and while he thus walks with a *misgiving* Conscience, and an *ill-a-boding* Mind, it is impossible but he must be *unstable in all his ways*.

5. He is at a *miserable* Uncertainty as to the *present* Event and Issue of his Actions. He knows, or at least he shrewdly suspects, that there is a *wise* and *all-seeing*, a *just* and *Almighty* Providence that over-rules all *Causes*, and disposes of all *Events*, and without which there is nothing can succeed how wisely soever it is designed and projected. He knows that in this *Superintending* Power and Providence there is an *essential* Goodness and rectitude of Nature, which invariably inclines it to *love* and *bless* Goodness and Righteousness, and to *hate* and *curse* their contraries in whomsoever it finds them; and being thus persuaded he cannot but conclude himself insecure whilst he either aims at *unjust* Ends, or uses *unjust* Means to obtain them, both the *one* and the *other* being infinitely odious to that *over-ruling* Power upon which his Success depends. For he must either imagine that the

most *probable* Way to oblige *this* Power to succeed him is to brave and *beckon* it into a *fawning* Compliance with his Wishes, than which there is nothing more absurd and unreasonable; or be at least infinitely *jealous* and *suspicious* that the *wicked* Courses he takes will, instead of obliging it to prosper them, arm its Vengeance against them, and provoke it to determine them in some *dire* Event. For if God hath the disposal of all *Events* whether *good* or *evil*, it is certainly every whit as reasonable a Project for a Man to drink *deadly* Poyson to obtain his Health, or to commit *high* Treason to escape hanging, as to endeavour to obtain any *Good*, or to escape any *Evil* by such Courses as God hates and abhors. For if the Way to obtain *his* Favour is to please him, and the Way to please him is to do what is pleasing to him, as most certainly it is; then it is as evident as any Proposition in the *Mathematicks*, that he who endeavours by such Courses as he knows are displeasing to him to obtain any *Good* or avoid any *Evil* with God's disposal, uses the most *contrary Means* to effect his Ends, and only spends his Pains to *thwart* and *countermine* himself. The *double-minded* Man therefore being conscious to himself that he hath rendered God his Enemy can never be reasonably

ably secure in *his own* Mind of obtaining any *Good*, or escaping any *Evil* that is in God's disposal. For tho' to serve the *wise* Ends of his Providence *God* many times gratifies bad Men, and gives them their *own* Hearts desire, yet for them to expect any *Good* at his hands, whilst the whole Course of their Actions is a *continued* Provocation of him, is the most *unreasonable* Presumption in the World; 'tis to suppose him not only *insensible* of Affronts and Injuries, but also *fond* of them, *pleased* and *delighted* with them to *that* Degree as to own himself obliged to crown and reward them with his Favours; For unless it be this, there is nothing they can fancy in the Nature of *God* that can incline him to be kind to them. While therefore they are in Pursuit of any *Good*, or in Flight from any *Evil*, if any *wise* Thought arise in their Mind concerning the *Event*, it must be very *anxious* and *desponding*. There is such a *Good* in my View which I would fain enjoy, and am resolved to use my *utmost* Endeavour to compass; but alas it is in the Disposal of *God* who is the *Sovereign* Arbitrator of my Fate, and unless he will be so kind as to award it to me, my *utmost* Skill and Conduct in the prosecution of it will prove insignificant; But how can I hope that
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he will succeed my Design, who hath so many Reasons to be my *mortal* Enemy ; and if he will not, he hath ten Thousand Accidents under his Command by any *one* of which he can baffle and defeat me ; and if he should gratify my Desire, I have no reason to believe that it is out of Kindness ; and if it be not, instead of a *Blessing* it will prove a *Curse* to me. There is such an *Evil* hangs over me that I would fain escape, and am resolv'd to imply my *utmost* Care and Industry to prevent it ; but when I have done all, it is in the hand of *God* whose Vengeance I have armed against me by a Thousand Provocations ; and if he will bring it upon me (which I have too much cause to fear) he can do it by those very *Means* whereby I am endeavouring to prevent it. And if he should succeed my Endeavours, I have *just* Ground to suspect that it will be in Displeasure to me ; and then it will prove but the Removal of a *less* Evil to make way for a *greater*. Thus if he truly reason with himself concerning the *Events* of *his own* Actions, it must create in him *infinite* Despondence and Anxiety. And whilst a Man thus lives in Fear of the *Event* it will be impossible for him to act with *any* Steadiness or security. This therefore is the Case of the *double-minded* Man, who being
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conscious to himself that all *Events* are in God's Disposal, whom he hath so many ways provoked to be his Enemy, must necessarily act with a *dubious* and *trembling* Mind, being so uncertain within himself whether *that* which he is doing will issue in his Benefit or Bane.

6. And lastly, He hath a most *dismal* Prospect before him of the *final* Issue and Event of all. Whenever he casts his Eyes beyond this *present* Scene of Things, wherein his Mind is tossed *to* and *fro* in such *infinite* Uncertainties; there hee sees nothing but *dismal* Horror and Tragedy, nothing but *Darkness*, *Wretchedness* and *Despair*; nothing but *Famine* to his Appetites, *Anguish* to his Mind, and *Torment* to his Conscience; nothing to accompany him but *Devils* and *drammed Ghosts*, nothing to entertain him but *horrible* Thoughts and *dire* Reflections; which *woful* Prospect; if he hath not outlived all Sense, must necessarily alarm all his Fears, and strike his very Soul into an Agony. And when a Man thus feels his *present* State bad, and foresees that the *future* will be ten Thousand Times worse, he must be a *perfect* Sot or a *miserable* Wretch. Whilst he is walking through this *short* Inclosure of Time here, at every Step he feels himself prick'd and torn by *his own* Cares, and

and Fears, and Anxieties, which like Bryars and Thorns grow up round about him ; and when he looks over the Pale into the *vast* Field of *Eternity*, there he sees nothing but *dire* and *horrid* Spectacles, nothing but *burning* Wrath and Vengeance attending to persecute him to *eternal* Ages. So that whether he looks *backwards* or *forwards*, or but just before him, his Eyes can find nothing but *uncomfortable* Objects. That which is *past* is all *tasteless* and *insipid* ; that which is *present* is mostly *nauseous* and *unpalatable* ; but that which is *to come* is all *dire* and *intolerable* ; and this is the sting of his Misery. Were his *past* or *present* Circumstances far worse than they are, they were *easy* to be born in the Prospect of a more *comfortable* Futurity ; but when *this* is worse, ten thousand times worse than the worst of what is either *past* or *present*, for a Man to pass through all these *sad* Things together with any Patience or Content requires the Hardiness and Insensibility of a Stone. It is sad enough, *God* knows, to walk through the Cares, and Fears, and Disquietudes which naturally attend a *false* and *double* Mind ; but to walk through all *these* within full view of Hell, and at every Step to perceive ones self approaching *nearer* and *nearer* to it, is to pass through a most *disfmal* Expectation

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on to a more *dismal* Experience, which is doubtless the most *woful* Condition that *humane* Life can be exposed to. And yet this is the Condition of the *double-minded Man*; who acts his Sin with an Expectation of suffering eternally for it, and robs within sight of the Place of Execution. And when with that *Persian* Judge he is thus condemned to sit out all his Days with the Sword of *eternal* Vengeance hanging over him by a *frail* Thread of Life, which is every moment in danger of breaking; how is it possible he should enjoy *himself* in any tolerable Degree of *Peace* and *Security* of Mind. Doubtless if he hath any sense of danger, the Foresight of so great a one as *this* of being *miserable* for ever, must necessarily create in him a *proportionable* Fear and Anxiety, and consequently render him very *unstable* in all his Ways.

What then remains but that seeing the State of *Hypocrites* and *double-minded Men* is so *wretched*, and *miserable*, and *insecure*, we all of us from henceforth resolve, as we tender *our own* Ease and Quiet, to lay aside all *Hypocrisy* and *Double-dealing*, and act through the remaining Part of our Lives with *Plainness*, *Integrity*, and *Simplicity* of Mind. Of which way of living if you would once be persuaded to make a *through* Expe-

Experiment, I dare engage you would find it abundantly more *secure*, and *easy*, and *comfortable* than that which you have hitherto pursued. And to convince you of the Truth of this, I will crave leave in a few Words to represent to you the *Reverse* of the *double-minded* Man's Life, and to shew you the *opposite* Advantages of living honestly and uprightly.

1. He who lives uprightly goes upon *firm* and *stanch* Principles, such as these, that there is a *God* that governs the World, that inspects all the Thoughts and Actions of Men, and will reward or punish them with *eternal* Happiness or Misery; which being founded upon as *full* Evidence as the Nature of the Thing will bear, and attested by the *inmost* sense of *humane* Nature, by the Consent of *wise* Men of all Ages, Nations, and Religions, and in short by the *unanimous* Vote of Mankind, are such as will endure the Test of our *severest* Reason, and give *ample* Satisfaction of their Truth to the most *inquisitive* Minds. The *upright* Man therefore proceeding upon such Principles as these treads upon *firm* ground, which he is secure will never sink under him, and which is more, if it should will in the End leave him in as *good* Condition as those who proceed upon the *contrary* Princi-

Principles. For whereas if their Principles prove false, their acting upon them will prove their *eternal* Ruin, if his should prove so, he will live more at Ease for them, more suitably to his Nature, and more satisfied with himself; and when he dies, he will only be left in the *same* Condition with *them*, in a State of *eternal* Sleep and Insensibility. So that if his Principles should prove *false*, he can never be the worse for acting upon them; but if they should prove *true*, he will be infinitely the better. And 'tis a vast security to the Mind to proceed upon such Principles as, if they prove *false*, will leave us *safe* and at *rest*, and if they prove *true* will leave us *eternally* happy.

2. The *upright Man* walks in a *plain, easy, and direct* Way. Those *eternal* Tracts of Righteousness and Goodness wherein he walks are so plainly *characterized* upon his Heart and Conscience by the Finger of God, and described and inculcated in the *divine* Oracles with so *brigh*t a Sun-beam, that if he honestly enquire he cannot miss them, and when he hath found them he cannot easily swerve from them. For whereas Wick- edness is a *boundless* Wilderness whose Paths do all *thwart* and *cross* one another, all Vices

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consisting in Extremes which are *direct* Contraries, and being either the Defects or Excesses of some Virtue; so that there are not only *two* Vices to every *one* Virtue, but both are Extremes running counter to one another: the Paths of Virtue lie straight forward between these *vicious* Extremes, and like *parallel Lines* never interfere. So that here a Man may walk on safely without any *great* Reach of Wit, or *laborious* Diligence of Enquiry, and needs do no more than follow *Solomons* Direction; *Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left, Prov. 4. 24, 27.* Here, according to the Prophet, is *an high way, called the way of holiness; the way-faring men, tho' fools, shall not err therein, Isaiah 35. 8.* And having so *plain* and *direct* a way before him he needs neither tire himself in the search of it, nor rack his Brains with any *anxious* Deliberations in the Choice of it, nor grate his Mind with Scruples and *galling* Regrets in the Pursuit of it; but may always find it with Ease, and follow it with Security.

3. The *upright* Man acts *openly* and without fear of Discovery; for being conscious to himself both that his Intentions are *clear*, and his Prosecutions of them *fair* and *honest*,

honest, he could be well enough content that he had a *Window* into his Breast that all the World might see through him. He knows that his Thoughts and Actions are such as will endure founding, and bear lifting to the Bottom ; and therefore takes no care to disguise himself in *false* Shews and Appearances. For he who can reflect upon *himself* with Satisfaction and Complacency may look all the World in the face with Confidence and Assurance; as knowing that the more *curiously* he is watch'd, and the more exactly he is scanned, the more highly he shall be approved by all that are *wise* and *good*. And tho' his Reputation may for a while be clouded by *Malice* or *Mistake*, yet he is fully satisfied that *one* time or *other* the very Light of Things will scatter these *Mists*, and clear these *Misprisions*, and that then he shall shine the *brighter* for being *over-cast*. And being thus satisfied he walks openly through the World with a *bare* Face, and in the sight of the Sun, having no Occasion to Skulk into Coverts and Retirements.

4. The *upright* Man lives in Peace with himself, and in an *amicable* Accord with his own Reason and Conscience. For he who follows his Reason, and makes his Conscience his Guide (as every *upright* Man doth)

can neither be reproached by the *one*, nor condemned by the *other* ; And having to all his Aims and Actions the *full* Approbation of his Reason and Conscience in *reiterated* Ecchos resounding after him, he hath always *good* Weather within and a *clear* Sky about him, wherein his Mind breaths none but *calm* and *wholsome* Thoughts, and hath a *hopeful* Confidence, and a *cheerful* Satisfaction in every Thing he doth, as being agreeable to his *own* Reason, conformable to his Duty, and *worthy* of himself. And being thus crowned with the Applauses of his *own* Conscience, he goes on through all the *Difficulties* of Life with Alacrity and Courage, having nothing from within to countermand or controul him, no Sting of *Remorse* for what he hath done, nor *Check* or *Struggling* against what he is doing ; nothing to pull him back from his way, or to cause him to halt in it, or any way to disturb and distract him in his Motion. And when at any time he is balk'd and defeated in any of his *honest* Designs and Prosecutions, he goes on with an *exact* Mind under the Disappointment, triumphing in the Integrity of his Heart and the Innocence of his Procedure, having a *Paradise within* him where he lives at Ease, and enjoys himself in Serenity and Peace, let Things be never so *stormy* and *tempestuous* without.

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5. The *upright* Man is secure of the *good* Issues and Events of his *honest* Aims and Prosecutions. Not that he is confident that Things shall always succeed according to his *present* Aims and Desires; but this he is sure of, that they shall always succeed as *God* would have them, who is *wiser* than he, and loves him better than he loves himself. He is satisfied with *this*, that *God* will never cross him but for very *good* Reasons; such Reasons, as if he himself did fully comprehend, would make him heartily wish that *God* in his *tender* Mercy would cross and disappoint him; and living under this Persuasion, he is secure in *his own* Mind that he shall either have what he desires, or something better in Exchange. He builds upon this, that if what he is projecting be *good* for him, it shall certainly succeed according to his Wishes; but that whether it be *good* for him or no, *God* knows better than he, and therefore if it doth not succeed, it is well for him that it doth not; because *God* certainly knew that it was not *good* for him that it should: And to be disappointed of those Hopes which he fancies are *good* for him, is a Thousand Times more for his Interest than to be gratified, which *God* knows will be *hurtful* to him; because he is certain, both that he may be

mistaken, and that God cannot. Wherefore let the worst that *can* arrive, (or that which through his Blindness and Folly he esteems the worst;) this he depends upon, that matters being rightly stated, he shall in the Issue of Things come off very well, so as to be a Gainer in the foot of the Account; and being thus persuaded, his Mind is not harrassed like other Mens, with *anxious* Thoughts concerning the Event, but let what will happen, he goes on with a *calm* and *satisfied* Mind, and embraces his Fortune with Satisfaction and Complacency.

6. And lastly, He hath a *fair* and *glorious* Prospect before him of the Issue and Events of all. The Sense of *his own* Integrity and Uprightness hath raised him to a *glorious* Hope, whereon he stands, like *Moses* on the Top of *Pisgah*, surveying the *heavenly Canaan*, whose *fruitful* Soil abounds with every Good, and flows with *everlasting* Pleasure: From whence with *joyful* Eyes he sees the *happy* Period of his *tedious* March through this *barren* Wilderness of Life: He sees the *blissful* Mansions and Abodes, that the God of Love hath prepared to receive him; He sees them most richly furnished with all the Delights that his *vast hungry* Desires can crave or swallow to *eternal* Ages. He sees that there is nothing but a short *momentary* Death,

Death, that like the River *Jordan*, separates *this* Wilderness from that *heavenly* Land, and that as soon as ever he hath past and forded this, his Travel will conclude in *endless* Rest and Pleasure, in the Accomplishment of all his Hopes, and the *full* Satisfaction of all his Wishes. With the Prospective of his *Faith* and *Hope* he beholds the *illustrious* Orders of *Angels*, the *glorious* Company of *Apostles*, the *goodly Fellowship* of *Prophets*, the *noble Army* of *Martyrs*, with Crowns of Glory and Blessedness on their Heads, beckoning to him from the *farther* Shore, to make haste thither, and come into the *joyous* Participation of their Society and Happiness. The sight of all which *glorious* Things, inspires his Heart with such an Addition of new Life and Vigor, as carries him on with Cheerfulness and Alacrity through all the *weary* Stages of his Life; for he who walks with *Heaven* in his Eye, is a Thousand Times happier in his Expectation, than if he had all the Goods this World affords in his Possession. The *upright* Man therefore having this *blessed* Expectation before him, he goes on with a *bold* and *secure* Mind, and in his Course is *steadfast* and *immoveable*, always *abounding* in the Word of the Lord; for *as much as he knows that his Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. Seeing therefore the
vast

vast Advantages Integrity and Uprightness hath of *Double-dealing*, as we tender our own Ease and Security, let us all study for the Future, to lead the Remainder of our Lives in *exact* Sincerity, and Simplicity of Heart; which will not only extricate us from the *greatest* Difficulties and Perplexities of this *present* Life, but also crown us with *immortal* Ease and Happiness in the Life to come: Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, to whom be Honour, and Glory, and Praise, from this time forth and for ever. Amen.

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